ImagineFX

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SURREAL SCI-FI ART
INTERGALACTIC ADVICE ON THE RULES OF COMPOSITION

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14 HOURS OF VIDEO WORKSHOPS!

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RISING STARS
10 HOT NEW ARTISTS
The most promising young artists of 2011 revealed!

Inside

BUILD A GIANT 3D FIGHTING MECH
CREATE ARMOURED CARS IN SKETCHUP
EXPERT ADVICE ON WARM-UP SKETCHING

FIRE UP YOUR
VEHICLE DESIGN

Master the mechanics of interstellar art with **Mike McCain**
PLUS Create custom brushes for spacecraft concepts!

It's art Jim, but not as we know it... page 64

LIFT OFF! SYD MEAD, RYAN CHURCH, CHRIS FOSS & MORE SHARE THEIR ART

Welcome...
to your launch pad!

Creativity can be an elusive beast. Sometimes it sits loyal and unwavering by our side as we slave away at a new piece of art. At other times – say, when we're sat in front of a blank canvas that's staring menacingly back at us – it's simply nowhere to be seen. One thing we need to remember during these difficult creative periods is that we're not alone. Every artist suffers this fate.

In our lead feature on page 64, The Mechanics of Industrial Design, I read with great interest how Syd Mead still frets over every single line of his art. Syd Mead! Even artists that we consider faultless heroes sometime struggle with their work. It's good to remember this, and that out of these dark times comes light.

One thing's for sure: the level of creativity on show from page 39 is awe-inspiring. Here we announce the recipients of ImagineFX's Rising Stars of 2011. The bar was definitely raised this year, and the ImagineFX team and judges had a hard time whittling down the talented entrants into ten worthy winners. I'm proud that we're helping to showcase and promote young artists at the dawn of their careers and I'm sure you'd like to see who we've chosen this year, too.

I hope that we've got enough packed within these pages to inspire you to pick up a pencil or pen and start working on something of your own. Maybe you want to be featured in ImagineFX one day? Or enter our Rising Stars contest next year? Whatever your goals, I hope that you get something out of this issue. See you next month!

Claire

Claire Howlett, Editor
claire@imaginefx.com

Our special cover for subscribers this issue.

ImagineFX
Cover artist

He's a computer science-educated, science-fiction loving concept artist – so who better than Mike McCain to paint our epic starship cover?

Mike McCain

COUNTRY: US
SOFTWARE: Photoshop
WEB: mikebot.net

Mike is an experienced concept artist with Seattle-based video game developer Moonshot Studios. When he's not painting widescreen sci-fi vistas for his day job he's rendering them in the comfort of his home. A fan of Star Wars and classic sci-fi, Mike was the perfect artist to give our retro starship cover some authentic, old-fashioned charm. ●

In progress

A fishy cover concept begins to take flight…

Mike sent over five sketches of his original ideas, including a medieval sci-fi themed 'homecoming' concept and a scene based on pushing the design of the NASA Space Shuttle. Ultimately, we decided on Mike's design inspired by the deep-sea angler fish, of all things!

The theme set, Mike began exploring the composition, colour and tone of the cover art. He worked in smaller ships to add detail to the scene and focused on the movement of the main ship, ensuring that it arched towards the viewer.

Mike has swung the viewer's gaze close and low into the image, giving the mothership more dynamism while unifying the palette around tones of orange and purple. Mike now adds decals and other details on the ships, and tightens the composition to create the final image.

FANTASY & SCI-FI DIGITAL ART
ImagineFX
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RISING STARS 2011

"Eye-catching advertisements, vintage photographs and even the most trivial things shape my art"
Anna Dittmann, one of our Rising Stars

Reader FXPosé
THE PLACE TO SHARE YOUR DIGITAL ART

See page 8 for the best new art ➤➤

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FANTASY & SCI-FI DIGITAL ART **ImagineFX**

Workshops

Advice and techniques from pro artists…

Artist Q&A

Improve figure drawing, paint beaches, alien landscapes and aggressive vehicles, advice on digital doodling and creating different perspectives, and lots more!
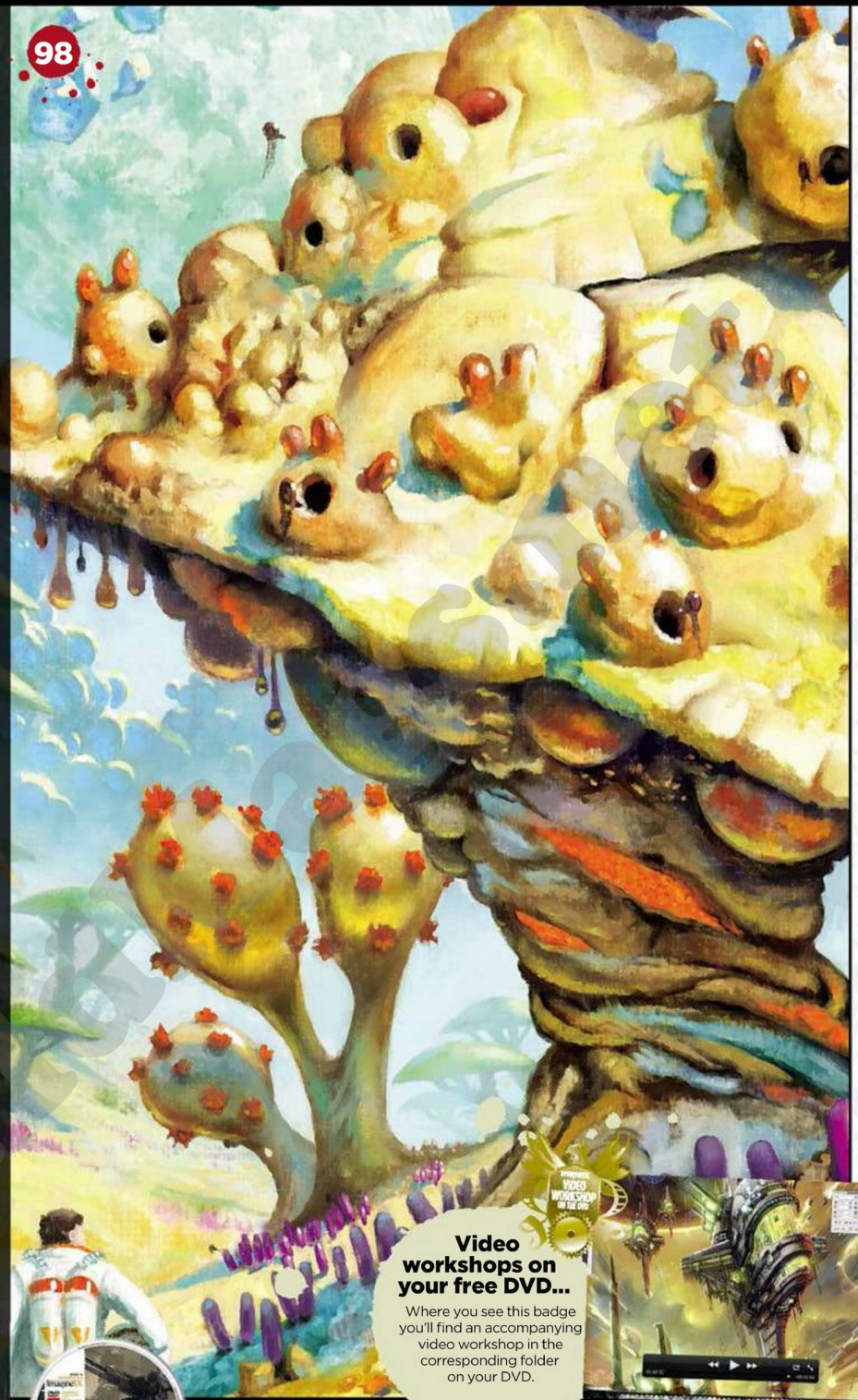
Video workshops on your free DVD…
Where you see this badge you'll find an accompanying video workshop in the corresponding folder on your DVD.

ON YOUR DVD
This month's essential art resources…

Sci-fi vehicle model bundle
Pose and then paint these 3D assets.

Over 80 photo textures
Including metal and machinery.
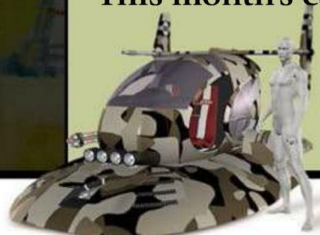
Reader FXPosé

THE PLACE TO SHARE YOUR DIGITAL ART

Alejandro Dini

LOCATION: Hong Kong
WEB: creationspot.com
EMAIL: info@creationspot.com
SOFTWARE: Photoshop

Born in Argentina, Alejandro grew up in Italy and is now living and working in Hong Kong. "All these places have helped my artwork," he says. "I graduated from the Istituto Europeo di Design in Italy as an illustrator, with the aim of becoming a children's book illustrator, but since then I've been working full-time on projects ranging from advertising and publishing to multimedia and graphic design."

The transition to digital art was pretty smooth for Alejandro. "I always work on personal pieces to explore different themes and new approaches," he tells us. "My aspirations are simple: to get better at what I like to do and to be published in the process." Job done!

1 EOWYN AND THE NAZGUL "This was painted for the ArtOrder challenge: the subject was illustrating the famous encounter from The Lord of the Rings. Being a fan of Renaissance painters, I decided to depict that scene as if it were created by Caravaggio or sculpted by Bernini. I painted the implicit symbolism of the scene, rather than making a faithful figurative representation."

2 FANATIC "This is about secret sects, deception and fanatic madmen worshipping tentacled deities. The character is an elven assassin with an odd vertical tattoo across his face and chest, not to mention a horrible grin inspired by Willem Dafoe in Wild at Heart. I wanted to portray him in a rather repugnant way, without turning him into a monster."

ARTIST OF THE MONTH

Alejandro wins himself a copy of Exotique 6 and Character Modeling 3. To find out more about these two indispensable art resources, go to www.ballisticpublishing.com.

FXPosé submissions to: fxpose@imaginefx.com

Artist crit

Illustrator Nick Harris admires Alejandro's use of 'visual clues' to bring greater impact

"I like the lowish eye level in both these pieces to introduce a feeling of menace. It works really well with the other nicely rendered visual clues to explain what's going on."

Alex Drummond
LOCATION: Australia
WEB: alexdrummo.com
EMAIL: alexdrummo@gmail.com
SOFTWARE: Photoshop

Alex is a freelance concept artist and illustrator working for THQ Studio Oz on unannounced projects, and also for a handful of independent clients. "I spend most of my time in my home studio," he says, "surrounded by art books and gaming paraphernalia. That's where the ideas come from."

Always looking for interesting projects to be a part of, Alex says he will "usually jump at the chance to work on a movie or role-playing game".

1 BANDIT VILLAGE "The high treetops offer concealment and safety for a mysterious people. They craft the branches and leaves into their homes and tie bones that they've scavenged as decoration."

2 WHITE DESOLATION "Your party is tired; the ice-swept landscape before you is menacing and dangerous. An avalanche has completely destroyed the bridge crossing and what hope was left is blown away with the biting wind."

3 HOLY PLACE "The air is relatively still here. Slow mist drifts in the air and fills a cavernous space. A large living shrine is surrounded by living rings of stone. A clan of druids has taken roost in the hollows."

IMAGINEFX CRIT

"You can see the influence of video games in Alex's paintings. His atmospheric landscapes demand to be explored and experienced, even before they've made it into the game's world."
Ian Dean,
Deputy Editor

John Brian Casacop
LOCATION: Philippines
WEB: jbsc.deviantart.com
EMAIL: jbcasacop@gmail.com
SOFTWARE: Photoshop

John's always had a burning passion to be a comic book artist, but after finishing college five years ago, he became an advertising creative. "It was my love for painting that made me jump ship and now I've become involved in the games development industry," he says.

As an artist, John says that he never gets tired of reading and rereading about the fundamentals of his craft. "I treat each painting as a journey where I learn various artistic principles, while coming to a deeper understanding of the experiences that influence my art."

1 THE SUMMER APPROACHES "This is a second version of a painting that I did last year. So much was my dissatisfaction that all I could think of was how to get rid of it. Upon finding out that even masters like Frank Frazetta revisited their works, I took courage and here's the outcome."

2 SCARLET BEAST IN A CAVERN "When I started painting this piece, my objective was to make sure the dragon looked scaly, without letting the details ruin the form of the subject. I stuck as closely as I could to the principles of emphasis and subordination, and I'm happy with how things turned out."

Ricardo Bessa

LOCATION: Portugal
WEB: rbessa-art.blogspot.com
EMAIL: rbessa.art@gmail.com
SOFTWARE: Photoshop, Illustrator, Painter

Ricardo moved from a small Portuguese town to Lisbon when he was 18, and studied art and multimedia for the next "three wonderful years". He then relocated to London to study an MA in illustration and animation at Kingston University.

"Fantasy is definitely one of my influences, even though the 'dragon/sword/semi-naked vixen' formula isn't really my approach," he admits. "I'd like to go on to a successful career as an illustrator (who wouldn't?), but I also want to try everything else – concept design, comic colouring and background painting."

1 THE HIVE OF THE EDENBIRDS "The Edenbirds, named after their long white tails and fragile appearance, are in fact aggressive animals that try to repel anyone who steps into their territory by buzzing like bees and swarming around the intruder."

2 SUNDAY MORNING EMPIRE "A warm, loving home where Sunday mornings lasted forever. Tracing Dragon Ball characters on the window was the most fun thing in the world. Hours were spent copying Pocahontas stills from the TV, after pausing the VCR just at the right moment. That's where I come from and this is who I am."

3 DON'T TRY TO PLEASE THE DRAGON "I rarely ever do fan art, but Marvel's Runaways (now on hiatus) definitely struck a chord at the time. This one was inspired by Nico and Karolina's wonderfully written relationship, and coloured during an almost all-nighter when I just couldn't stop painting. Aren't those the best?"

IMAGINEFX CRIT

"There seems to be so many ideas floating around Ricardo's art, and they all get explored with equal measure, with his ordered composition, powerful use of colour and fantastic detail flourishes. Is that bird flying upside down, or sunbathing mid-air?"

Beren Neale,
Staff Writer
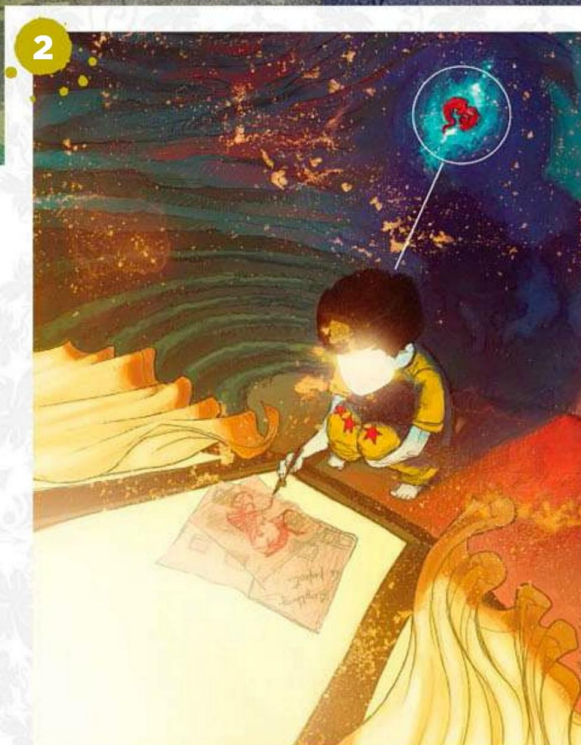
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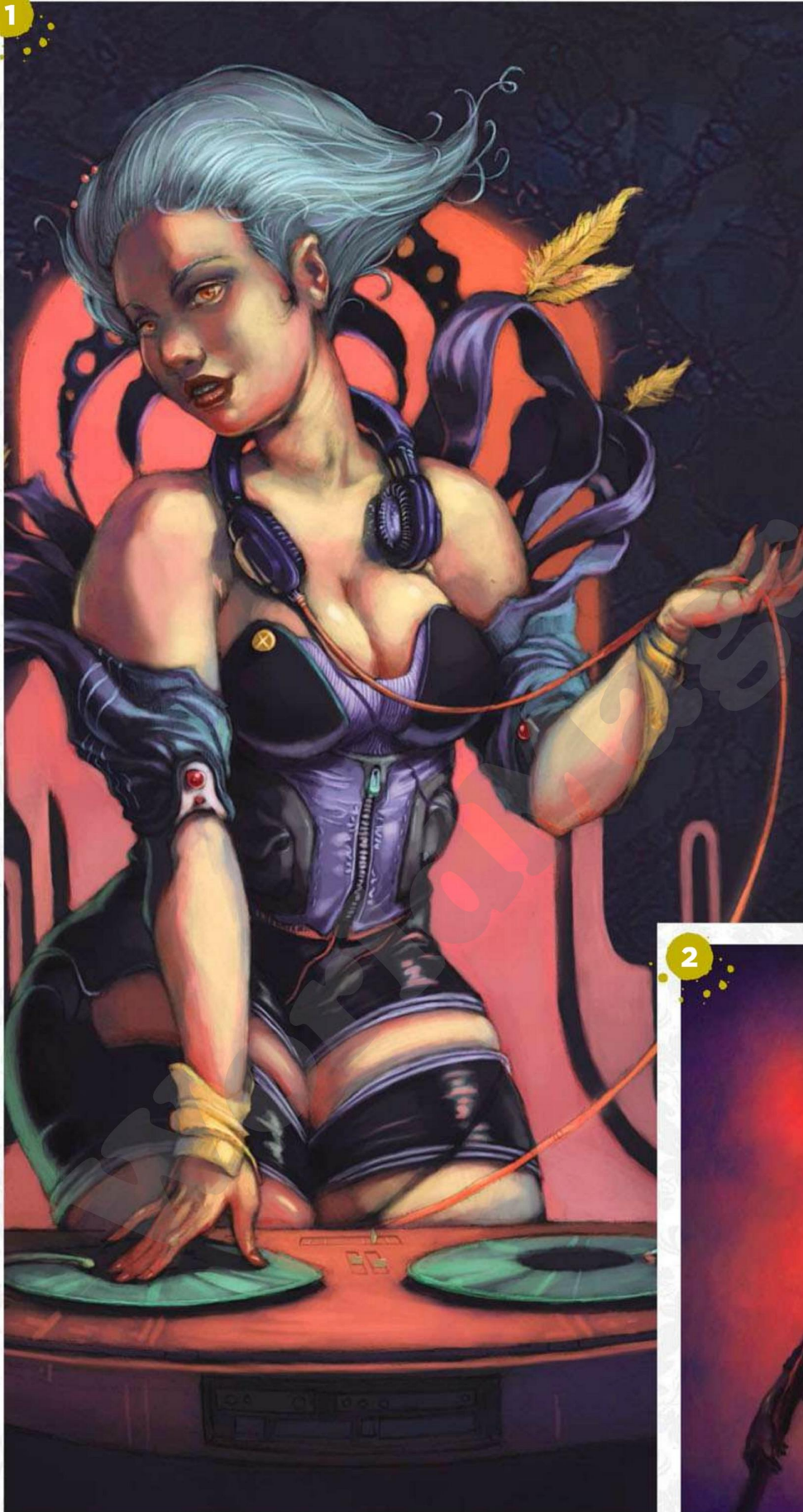
🇺🇸 **Matt Howley**
LOCATION: US
WEB: flickr.com/mhowley
EMAIL: matthew.howley@massart.edu
SOFTWARE: Photoshop

Matt is a junior illustration student at Massachusetts College of Art. "I've loved my experiences at the school so far and have been given many opportunities to execute my assignments in the digital medium," he says.

Over the past year Matt has became active in online art communities like ConceptArt.org. "Here I got the chance to try and bring my artwork to a professional level in both technicality and content," he says. "And since I'm a sucker for any kind of science fiction art, online has been like nirvana."

1 **ELECTRONIKA** "This is the quintessential sexy sci-fi, blue haired, DJ babe. For this one, a quick walk to the Museum of Fine Arts helped me get the inspiration I needed to paint skin tones in this manner. I looked at the figures in baroque art from greats such as Caravaggio for pointers."

2 **TIMELORD** "This is my rendition of Death Incarnate, or Father Time as some call him. I wanted to create an image that centralised light and focus around the subject's head. I learned this technique from looking at old baroque era portraits, where much of the subject is hidden in darkness."

2
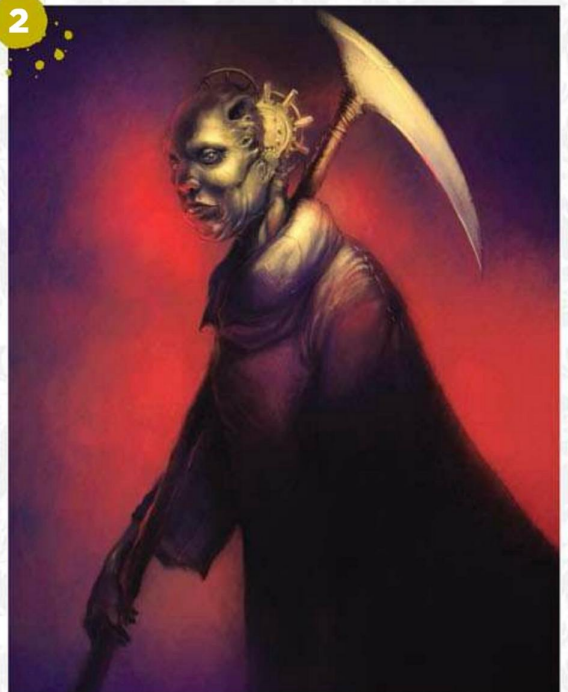
🏴 **Halmurzaev Edward**
LOCATION: **Kyrgyzstan**
WEB: **mutabor-kg.cghub.com**
EMAIL: **mutabor.kg@gmail.com**
SOFTWARE: **Photoshop**

Born in the USSR 37 years ago, Halmurzaev moved to Kyrgyzstan when the Soviet Union dissolved. Graduating from Karakol University, he went on to illustrate eight books, entering the world of digital art in 2004. "Since then most of my work has been done on computer," he says. "Previously my illustrations had been in watercolour or oils, but when the first digital tablet appeared in our publishing house, I immediately gravitated to it."

Currently working as a PR manager, Halmurzaev draws in Photoshop in his free time.
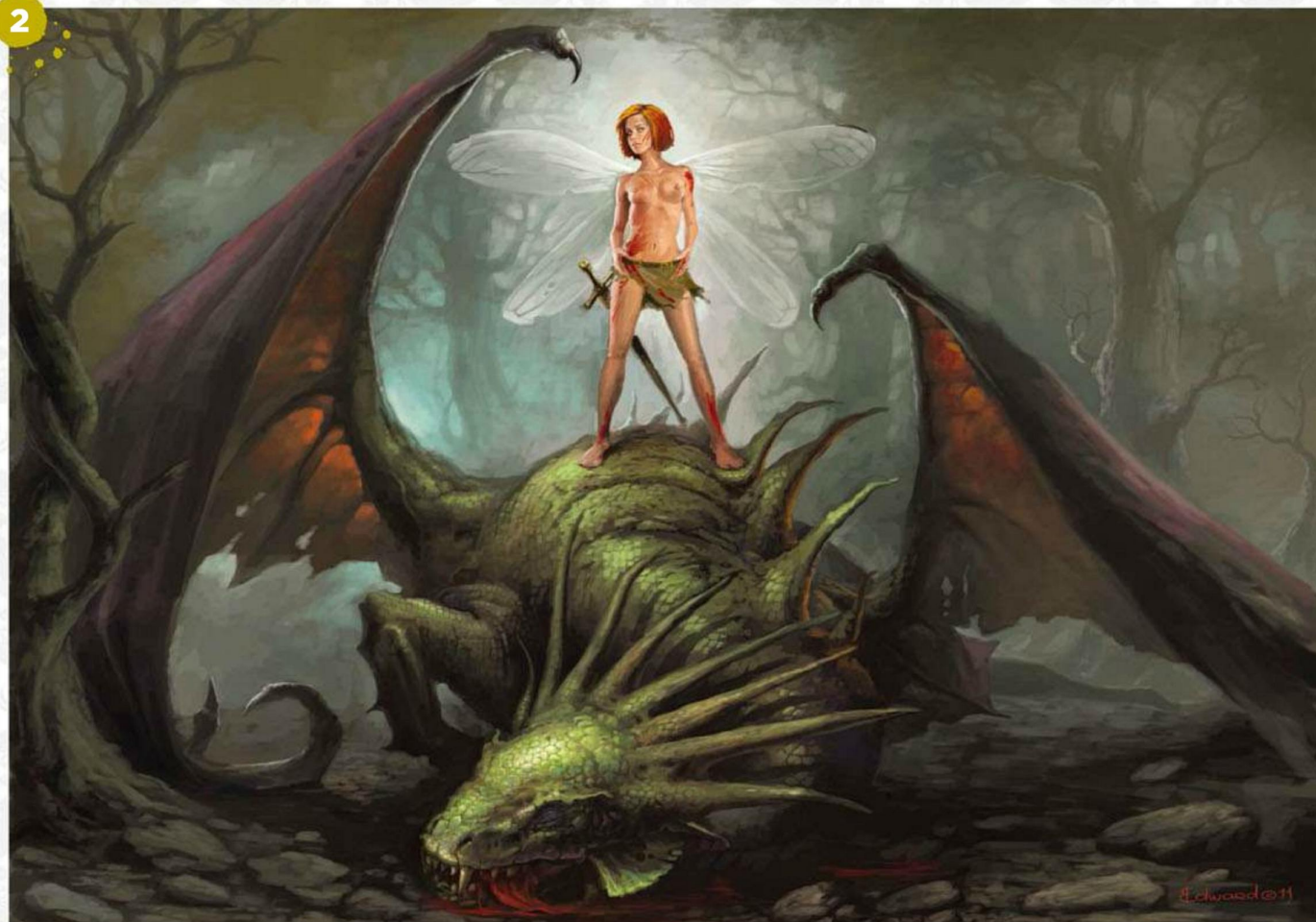
IMAGEFX CRIT

"Boris Vallejo's name springs to mind when I see Halmurzaev's art – which is no bad thing, of course! His female characters are placed in situations that verge from the heroic to the erotic, showing the breadth of his storytelling abilities."
Cliff Hope, Operations Editor

1 DRAGON LOVE "This is one of a series of artworks that feature two characters – beauty and the monster. Although the topic is widespread in fantasy, in this series I wanted to show the hidden part of the relations between them. The background in these works is absent intentionally, because it seems superfluous to me."

2 UNEQUAL FIGHT "A dragon is vanquished. Who is the hero? It's a small, fragile elf girl, who is wounded, bloodied and has battered wings. And the viewer starts to think about how this fight played out. Most likely it took place in the sky, with the dragon finally falling to Earth. The difference in strength is represented by the wings of both combatants: powerful, heavy, membranous wings of a reptile and the thin, dragonfly wings of the elf."

3 SATYR AND NYMPH "I spent a lot of time on this image – about two months in total. Again, it's up to the viewer to decide what's happening. Is the nymph afraid of the satyr? Is she hiding or flirting? In a word, love."

SEND US YOUR ARTWORK!

Want to see your digital art grace these very pages? Send your work to us, along with an explanation of your techniques, the title of each piece of art, a photo of yourself and your contact details. Images should be sent as 300dpi JPEG files, on CD or DVD. All artwork is submitted on the basis of a non-exclusive worldwide licence to publish, both in print and electronically.

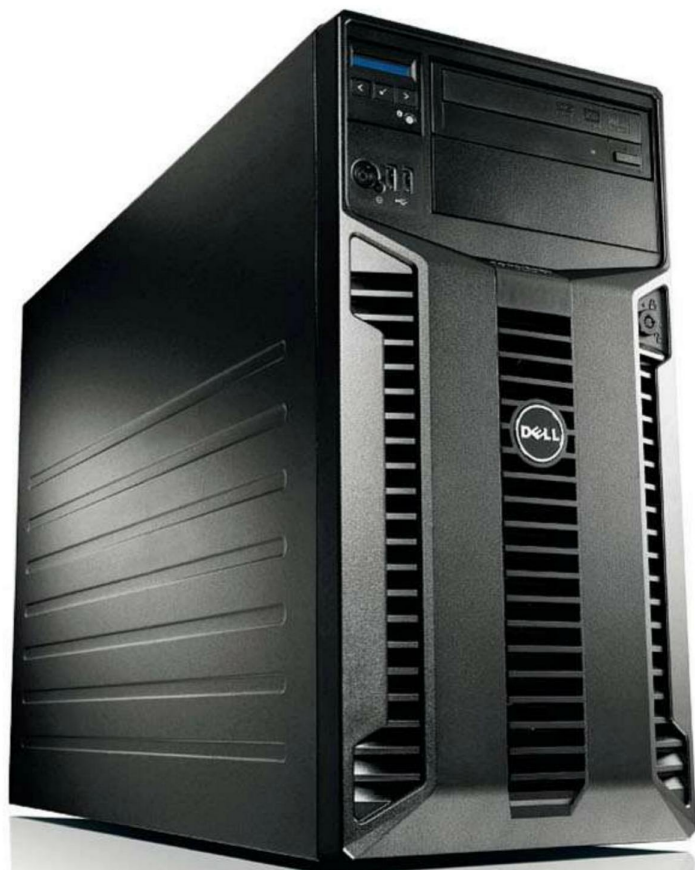You can also email submissions for FXPosé. Bear in mind that files must be no more than 5MB in total, or we won't receive them. **fxpose@imaginefx.com**

SEND YOUR ARTWORK TO:
FXPosé
ImagineFX
30 Monmouth Street
Bath, BA1 2BW
UK

Secure your server

Virtualisation can boost your bottom line – if you protect it

Virtualisation is big news for small and medium-sized businesses – it enables them to do much more work with much less kit by running multiple operating systems on a single server.

That's good news for a range of reasons – reducing carbon footprint, improving IT efficiency and saving piles of cash. But it seems that many businesses aren't protecting their virtualised systems. So how can you keep yours safe?

Simple steps
Security firm Symantec surveyed nearly 700 companies in 28 different countries, discovering firms investing in virtualisation weren't taking simple steps to protect their data. Just 15% were backing up data used in their virtual environments, and an incredible 80% weren't protecting their virtual environments with anti-virus software.

That's an incredibly risky approach, especially when securing your server is so simple. From the smallest start-up to the biggest agency, Dell has the security solutions to keep your stuff safe.

Multiple lines of defence
Dell has created four kinds of security solutions: security services, which provide a comprehensive range of monitoring, management and security consulting services; network security, which protects your business not just from malware such as viruses and worms but also from intruders and even spam; endpoint security, which protects the data on PCs, notebooks, servers and mobile devices; and data security, which enables you to protect sensitive data from prying eyes, digital disasters and good old-fashioned human error.

Secure the perimeter
Protecting your network from intrusion is easier than you might think. Appliances such as the Dell PowerConnect J-SRX series provide world-class firewall protection and IP Security (IPsec)

virtual private networking technologies. Easy, quick and secure to deploy, the J-SRX series offers superb intrusion protection, anti-virus protection, anti-spam screening and even web content filtering.

Better than a bouncer
Dell also provides tools to protect individual devices – systems with Intel® vPro™ processor technology can automatically stop viruses from spreading, ensure secure data storage and receive security updates even when PCs are off. Remote diagnostics and repairs, asset inventory and zero-touch configuration enable you to deploy, manage and update vPro systems from your desk.

Trend Micro Worry-Free Business Security Services can be preinstalled on Dell systems to protect against malicious software and mail, restrict users' access to sites, and provide continuous protection for your mobile workforce – without requiring dedicated hardware or IT staff.

For larger networks, the Dell KACE K1000 Management Appliance offers even more powerful security, including quarantining compromised devices, automatic software patch management for Windows and Mac OS X operating systems and applications, vulnerability scanning and secure web browsing.

Security saves money
Dell also provides networked storage to ensure every digital asset is archived. Solutions such as Dell PowerVault RD1000 removable disk storage offer low-cost, rock-solid, super-speedy backup, while larger organisations can benefit from the server-connected PowerVault MD3220 storage array's incredible scalability, supporting up to 96 additional drives between up to four servers.

By protecting your data and systems, by ensuring things run 24/7, by patching software vulnerabilities, enforcing policies and helping you comply with data protection legislation, Dell's solutions can save you time, effort and money.

The Dell difference
Dell servers work as hard as you do. We work with leading Independent Software Vendors (ISVs) to deliver unrivalled performance and reliability, and our PowerEdge tower servers and rack servers are built for demanding jobs in creative, engineering and architectural design; web design and development; photo editing, finance and product design. With the latest technology in our scalable servers and storage solutions, Dell is the one-source partner to match your IT ambitions.

To find out more, please visit us at www.dell.co.uk/poweredge or call us on 0844 444 3359

Trying to break into the digital art industry? Julie Bell and other leading pros offer their advice on how to get noticed.

"Bringing printed samples of work as brochures or booklets to hand out is a must" Julie Bell

AND THE WINNER IS...
After nearly a year of scouring the Earth, the Share One Planet Wild Animals CG Art Elites Invitational Competition has concluded. See the results here.
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ONLINE INSPIRATION
Check out some of the many gems that we found on the pages of deviantART, including this piece by Adelenta, which demonstrates her mastery of colour.
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ARTIST IN RESIDENCE
Davi Blight's Turbine Inc office space is cluttered with statues, figurines, toys and other nik-naks. But that's just how he likes it – it makes him feel more homely.
Page 22

Work your magic

Career secrets Beat the competition and become a digital art rising star with these top tips from some of the industry's leading professionals

If you've started looking for a job in the digital art industry, you'll know it's difficult to break into, with no clear road signs to point you towards guaranteed success. This can seem intimidating for new artists but, with the right advice, it's another great opportunity to be creative.

A good starting point is getting an internship, although these aren't easy to come by, so if given the opportunity make it count. "View your internship as your last chance at making it in the industry," says illustrator and games artist Colin Fix. "Work your butt off, ask lots of questions and learn everything you can from the talent around you."

This is also a perfect situation in which to make contacts. Just remember where you are and in what capacity. "Games, VFX, animation, film and TV are all tight knit worlds," says Colin. "Don't sit at the lunch table mouthing off about how some movie you saw on TV last night sucked hamster shit – the guy sitting across the table from you could be the art director."

The seemingly glamorous worlds of TV and film are many artists' first choice of employment. But only a small percentage of artists walk into their dream first job, so try not to limit your options. "Some parts of the industry are less competitive than others," says illustrator James Gurney. "Fewer people think of scientific illustration or toy design, for example, compared to movie concept art."

To widen your choices, try developing your skills in different areas of design to build up your portfolio and take advantage of online training. "The internet has made learning art for games and film way ➤➤

Julie Bell believes that, although daunting, networking at conventions can be a real positive.

James Gurney says you may have more chance of gaining that all-important experience if you opt for less-popular areas of the industry.

Both Colin Fix (left-hand sketch) and Christian Alzmann (right-hand sketch) stress the importance of having strong foundation skills.

INDUSTRY INSIGHT
CHRISTIAN ALZMANN
ILM senior VFX art director on seeing the bigger picture

How important is it for artists to promote themselves online?
Nowadays I believe it's far more important to have a blog or website than a hard copy portfolio. With the ease and affordability of it there's no excuse to not have either to show your work. Posting work and commenting on others' on forums can be a huge benefit, too.

What advice would you give to artists to help them stand out?
I still believe the best way to stand out as an artist is to have strong foundation skills, including composition, colour, drawing, perspective and form. These are all skills that are learned through much work and repetition. All artists constantly strive to improve them, and when these skills are good and strong they are very hard to overlook. You should also try to find other influences unrelated to the field you want to work in. This can not only help fuel your own creative style, it'll also help to keep ideas fresh and fun for you.

What's your top tip for breaking into the industry?
It's great to fill your portfolio with blue sky designs for new worlds that have never been seen before, but it's also important to show you can design under the constraints of a production. Often a producer will be looking at your work, so make sure you show something that relates to production work. A couple of orthographic drawings, design turnarounds or texture call-outs for a design are good things to show. Prove you understand that many other artists are going to look at your artwork down the line for instruction on what they have to build, paint and render.

Christian has worked at ILM since '98 and has also released a digital illustration workshop with The Gnomon Workshop.
christianalzmann.com
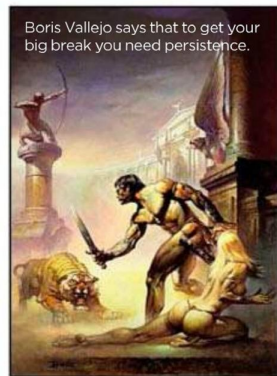
Boris Vallejo says that to get your big break you need persistence.

more accessible than it's ever been," says Colin. "But it's also homogenised the look of a lot of the work, so it's becoming even harder to stand out. Push yourself to have solid drawing, painting and sculpting skills and also try to bring something uniquely 'you' to the table."

You should then showcase that 'you' by competing in online creative challenges and posting work on forums – especially if you know those forums get seen by the right people. "I find almost 100 per cent of my new artists through the challenges on my website now," says senior art director at Wizards of the Coast, Jon Schindehette. "I also surf CGHub every now and then and also find artists in our submissions folder and art convention portfolio reviews."

Such conventions are a great place to meet like-minded people and employers on the hunt for new talent, so make the most of them. "Bringing printed samples of work as brochures or booklets to hand out is a must," says fantasy artist Julie Bell. "It can be hard to talk to prospective clients, but you have to be willing and able to meet and talk to people."

Finally, don't take no for an answer! "Be persistent," says fantasy artist Boris Vallejo. "If you keep at it you have the possibility of success. If you don't you have the certainty of failure."

Share and share alike

### Virtual wildlife Share One Planet competition winners announced

The Chinese-based Share One Planet competition, co-organised by LeewiArt and Beijing Imperial Court Cultural Development Company, has closed and the winners have been announced.

With the help of respected digital artists including Andrew Jones, Adrian Smith and Mark Snoswell, hundreds of entries were judged under the separate categories of Herd, Harmony, Mother's Love, Prey and Predator, Swan Lake, Digital Sculpture and Portrait.

Panel judge Mark Snoswell was certainly impressed with the results. Commenting on Antonio Javier Caparo's winning piece for the Portrait category, he said: "This image may well become an icon of our times. Caught in the headlights of our rampant consumption, this shy little creature clings onto the planet. The composition is exquisite. The lighting is excellent and the message compelling."

To see all the winning pieces visit **bit.ly/qcffzL**.
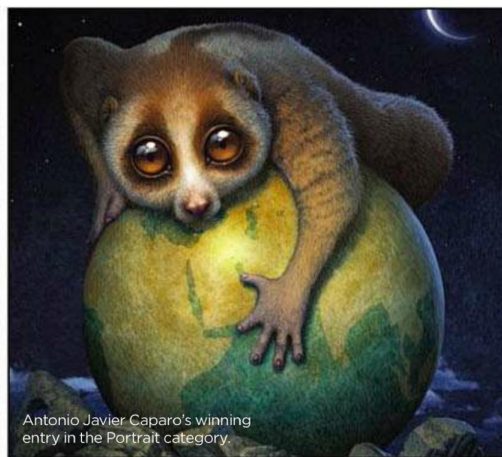
Antonio Javier Caparo's winning entry in the Portrait category.

Liam Peters won 'Harmony' with this stunning image.

Fantasy talk Explaining the inexplicable
"I use nudity to convey a sense of timelessness – clothing can confuse the idea"
Note that Jace Wallace is talking about painting female nudes, not his wardrobe on a night out…

Life is Humiliation
by Matt Boyce

Unfinished books haunt my dreams

I have more books than I could possibly read. Pile of books

I scour charity shops & second hand book shops to find more! Wow I must buy it!

any genre, it doesn't matter! UBIK Philly K Dick CATCH 22 except romance!

at any one time I'm reading five books

It can take me years to finish a book! I have grown old reading this book. WAR & PEACE

and some books I will never complete. MOBY DICK

the characters of these books haunt my dreams. Why haven't you read me yet?

let me out of this literary limbo

did you not find me interesting enough?

finish us!

finish us or we'll finish you

Alien Apple game art studio has been up and running since August.

Take me to your orchard

UK studio With plenty of behind-the-scenes preliminary work and a savvy take on industry trends, Alien Apple has landed…

Stuart Jennett's slick design style (below) was honed by years working in comics and games.

For every end there is a beginning – that's Paul Dolan's take on things. With co-workers Donna and Stuart Jennett, he used the end of their work at THQ Digital UK to strike out by themselves, creating Alien Apple Studios in August 2010.

With 50 years collective experience in comics, games and branding projects, the trio boast an impressive industry record. They also have their finger on the pulse. "Several large studios have folded in the UK recently," says Paul, "leaving a creative vacuum that's been the catalyst for people like us to start up independent games studios, which in turn is aiding a boom in the indie games scene."

Next-generation consoles have led to higher game production values, and so bigger teams. "The impact of these huge overheads," he says, "has meant we're moving quickly towards a business model that has a core group of staff on the title from beginning to end, and when production is in full swing, freelance staff and outsourcing studios, like ours, are brought in if needed."

With the boom in online and mobile gaming giving indie studios projects outside of the mega titles, this is the time for new, talented game art studios to make a name for themselves. For now they're keeping their projects close to their chest, but watch out for new work by Alien Apple at **alienapplestudios.com**.

The studio is made up of three art directors with distinct styles.

+deviantWATCH

Here are some of the many gems we found on the pages of deviantART…

Hector Sevilla Lujan

elsevilla.deviantart.com

Many offer selected highlights in their dA galleries, but this Mexican artist shows off loads of his art. Quality matches quantity too – Hector's images blend simple line art and virtuoso detail. His subjects are idealised females on the whole, but there's something to surprise you in each painting.

Adelenta

adelenta.deviantart.com

She may have recently put a lot of her art in 'storage', but the pieces that are left (13 finished pieces and one step-by-step walkthrough) are worth checking out. Sublime fantasy-tinged female portraits are the stock of Adelenta's trade, with subtle lighting and masterful use of colour.

Geoffroy Thoorens

djahal.deviantart.com

Looking around Geoff's gallery, you'd be forgiven for thinking that there was photographic evidence of recent alien invasions and newly discovered paradises with sci-fi foundations on earth. A closer look will reveal these atmospheric matte paintings have character as well as technical skill.

Next to my lamp and casts I keep a few action figures that I've picked up and put here, just because they pretty up the desk.

Solid anatomy skills help you create the best 'believable' kind of aliens and monsters, like the D&D creature on my screen.

A mirror is mounted to my monitor so that I can look out for lurkers.

While most of my work is done digitally, I keep a rarely used sketch pad around for those moments of inspiration that demand an old-fashioned scribble.

ARTIST IN RESIDENCE

Davi Blight

Turbine tour Surrounded by statuettes and over 100 fellow artists, it's not surprising that Davi finds his workspace hard to leave…

This is my office space at Turbine Inc, which is located in a large open room with about 100-plus other employees, so it can get noisy. I've been working at Turbine for over a year now and do conceptual design for three projects: Lord of the Rings Online, Dungeons & Dragons Online and an unannounced title.

For LotRO and DDO, my tasks include a lot of reward items for players, such as armour, outfits and new weapons, as well as new creatures to vanquish. However, for most of my time at Turbine I've been working on the unannounced title, making roughly 80 per cent of my work NDA.

I clutter my desk with statues, figurines, toys and other nik-naks to help the space feel more comfortable and homely. I have

I'm doing some touch-up work on a Dungeons & Dragon's creature created by the Daelkyr (makers of the Beholders). I primarily use Painter for all of my work, but sometimes I will throw in a dash of Photoshop or SketchUp.

As I work on Lord of the Rings Online from time to time, I need the dark lord Sauron's presence to help encourage me to work harder. He was bought from Weta's shop and I placed an Ikea LED light inside to help his intense gaze.

five casts by Philippe Faraut that me and a few other artists gather round to study once a week during lunch. An Anatomy Tools human male borders my monitor for reference, which gets more use during the time after hours when I play around with ZBrush. The collections of figures I have scattered around the desk are from various animes, games, comic books, cartoons and films, which are lit by little LED spotlights.

In the creative studio at Turbine, my desk is almost the only spot you'll not see a Cintiq, and that's by choice! I've always preferred the feel of the Intuos to the Cintiq, but I know I'm in the minority on that. Also, there's a sketchpad that I fool people into thinking I use! I do 99 per cent of my work digitally. I feel very comfortable at my desk and will often forgo heading home right away after I've put my time in, and hang out to continue drawing. Which must be a good sign.

Davi is a freelance concept artist and illustrator based in Boston, Massachusetts. You can see his art at daviblight.blogspot.com.

Under my main monitor, I stash smaller odds and ends that I like to keep around. These include a stylus holder, Kid Robot Dr Girlfriend and Birdgirl collectables, birthday candles with "mobster the lobster", anatomytools.com skull and female head, and quarters for soda.

In the corner of my desk I keep my casts by Philippe Faraut, which I do studies from at least once a week. The lamp is a Verilux full-spectrum sunlight lamp to help on the darker days. Oh, and a beautiful Super Meat Boy poster lines the back of my bookcase, by the talented artist Dave Rapoza.

FANTASY & SCI-FI DIGITAL ART
ImagineFX Forum
Winners

Image of the month

Pretty ugly Claiming his second scalp, Dave Brasgalla produces another stunning winning piece without going through the motions

Dave manages to capture the precise and delicate nature of the Troll's craftsmanship with a perfect pose.

Dave previously won Image of the month back in issue 69 with a stunning watercolour-style digital piece. Here Dave has swapped lively colour for a more subdued palette, concentrating the viewer's eye on his character – a particularly thoughtful troll.

The artist also tried out a new approach in this piece. "I often work subtle texture into my digital paintings near the end to create a bit of unpredictability," he explains, "but for this challenge I tried painting directly on top of a heavy texture. I found my brushwork became more vigorous and loose as a result."

MYFX TITLE: Grumpy Troll Craftsman
WINNER: Dave Brasgalla
GALLERY: imaginefx.com/dave-brasgalla

IMAGINEFX CRIT
"I found it interesting to see Dave's WIP go from that first unreadable scribble to this. As usual, I love the result and I think it has rather a Scandinavian feel about it."
Charlotte Ahlgren (voluspa)

MYFX TITLE: Sun King Beetle
WINNER: Marie Deslauriers (Heimdayel)
GALLERY: imaginefx.com/heimdayel

"The brief mentioned some yellow colouring on the beetles' shells... I just had to go over the top with a bright lemon yellow for the whole beetle then! Adding some extreme motherly instincts, aggressiveness and sharp bony protrusions finished the job for one mean-looking critter. The mix of 3D render and 2D paintover was particularly fun for this week's challenge."

MYFX TITLE: Temple Ruins
WINNER: Matt G (Disco Matt)
GALLERY: imaginefx.com/disco_matt

"I don't normally do environment paintings and I was going to quit half-way through this one, because I always seem to get lost at what to do next. But I kept on with it and got bold with hard shapes and colour, and in the end I was really pleased with how it turned out. I purposely went into the painting keeping the composition, values, custom brushes and textures in mind. Jungle is massive!"

MYFX TITLE: The Cain Mutie
JOINT WINNER: Matt Cornforth (Riox)
GALLERY: imaginefx.com/riox

"I enjoyed taking part in this challenge because it forced me out of my comfort zone. With this image I wanted to hold back on things such as colour and accessories, to try to focus the design on the character. So after large quantities of rum and a night of pirate movies, I finally settled on this character and pose."

JOINT WINNER: Alessandro Brunelli (Catoz)
GALLERY: imaginefx.com/catoz

"This was my first Forum challenge and I really enjoyed taking part in it because I love to paint creatures and characters – more so if they're mutations! Because my character's a pirate I opted for an underwater look that has more than a hint of Lovecraft about it. I focused more on the mutated parts of the character while trying to maintain a scary human visage."

Letters
YOUR FEEDBACK & OPINIONS

Contact the editor, Claire Howlett, on **claire@imaginefx.com** or write to ImagineFX, Future Publishing, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, BA1 2BW, UK

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Put an end to subscriber covers

There's one thing that stops me subscribing to ImagineFX. Even though it's a hassle picking up each issue in person and it costs more, it's still better than having a cover with the coverlines missing.
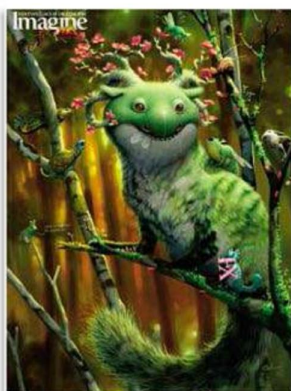
Creating a great cover is only partly the work of the artist. The rest is down to your magazine designer. A well-executed cover image leaves room for the coverlines, and when you take them away, you're left with a gaping absence of detail where they once were.

Then there's the practical side. I subscribed for a year once, back when ImagineFX was new. Now, when I'm flicking through my stacks of back issues, there's nothing to remind me what's in each of the subscriber issues without opening it up and scanning the contents. That quickly becomes tedious when I'm trying to find a particular article. Imagine how that would be amplified for someone who had been subscribing for longer.

I know the clean cover is supposed to be a perk: a nice, uncluttered image for your subscribers to covet. But what you're actually doing is paying more in print and distribution costs to give your subscribers a lesser product. Instead, why not use those funds for something that's less gimmicky and has more lasting value?
David, via email

We found that the majority of subscribers prefer coverline-free covers, but if you think different, let us know!

Claire replies Thanks for your comments about the subscriber cover, David. Various options have been tried over the years to give subscribers added value in their covers. We ran a poll on deviantART about this very subject, and subscribers opted overwhelmingly for a coverline-free cover. We can only go with one option for all subscribers. Of course, I'd be interested to hear points of view from other subscribers.

Justin's iPad art is coming along nicely – who knows, it could only be a matter of months before we feature more of his work in our FXPosé section.

More iPad art?

I've been doing a spot of drawing on my iPad during my commutes to work. What are the chances of ImagineFX doing a feature dedicated to iPad art and, should the occasion arise and my work made the grade, would you want to feature any of it in the magazine? I currently work in SketchBook Pro for the iPad, and have attached some of the work I've done over the past few months. I hope you like it!
Justin Barlow, via email

Claire replies Thanks for sending in your work, Justin. We've done quite a few workshops and stories on how to create iPad art, but there's always room for more. Readers, are there any devices other than an iPad that you'd like us to use in the mag?

A difficult task ahead

I was an aspiring concept artist/matte painter attending college in San Diego. I recently became diagnosed with a rare auto-immune disease and am losing the use of my right arm because of tumour-like growths. Because of my condition, I've been trying to learn to paint left-handed. It's a big part of my day. I'm in debilitating pain but my love of digital painting keeps me going.

Reading your magazine and seeing all the submitted works and great tutorials inspires me. I plan on submitting a piece once I get proficient with painting with my left arm. My favourite artists are Craig Mullins, Raphael Lacoste, Yanick Dusso, Justin Sweet, Feng Zhu and all the Steambot guys, to name just a few. I'm obsessed with digital art in all its forms. My Intuos 4 is on my lap while I lie in bed most of the time, along with the latest issue of ImagineFX.
Randy Espinosa, via email

Claire replies I'm so sorry to hear that you've been struggling with your health, Randy. But you know who else had to learn to paint with their left hand? Frank Frazetta. Keep on trying, and I look forward to seeing some of your art soon.

DID YOU MISS ISSUE 75?
We've still got a few copies left, but you need to move fast! See page 57 for details on how to get hold of one.

An alternative solution

I've just received your latest issue and reading through Q&A, I noticed the question, "How can I separate my scanned line art from its background to add colour?"

I thought the answer was okay, but could be improved, mainly because it still made use of a Multiply layer mode. That isn't really separating the line art – it's just adjusting the layer. So I thought I'd email you a technique I've been using for a few years to separate line art completely, enabling you to adjust the line easily.

First, scan in your drawing, then use Levels to adjust the image, getting rid of smudges or paper texture. Now select all and choose Copy. Go into the Channels tab and create a new alpha channel. Paste your image into this channel.

Drag the alpha channel into the button at the bottom of the Channels window: it's a circle outline made of dots. This loads a channel as a selection and you'll see that the line art has been selected. Select Inverse and copy this selection. Go back to your layers tab, create a new layer and hit Paste. Voila! There's only line art in this new layer, nothing else.

One last thing I like to do is go to Brightness and Contrast and take them both right down, to make sure the line is one solid colour without any flakes of white. Then you can easily select the line and recolour it or erase sections.

Anyway, feel free to use that if you like – just hit me with a credit.
Ross Burt, via email

Claire replies Ross, thanks for sharing your line-art tips. As the old adage goes, there are many ways to skin a cat, and your technique will suit many of our readers. We try to gather as many different ways of working from as many different artists as possible. Have any other readers got tips to share?

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Issue 1 February 2006

This is the digital version of the first – and very collectable – print edition of ImagineFX. Inside we dedicate our first-ever legends accolade to Frank Frazetta, while our workshop section covers creating a matte painting, colour theory, manga and photo references.

Issue 4 May 2006

Twenty five tips to design better aliens, plus workshops from Marta Dahlig, cover artist Jason Chan and Gary Tonge show how to paint abstract images, gothic portraits and speed-paint a landscape. We also talk with Brom, Mike Corriero and Thierry Doizon.

Issue 43 May 2009

We love Pepper! Stanley Lau tells us about the genesis of our cover star, Chester Ocampo paints a magical manga character, while Marta Dahlig shares her ten favourite Photoshop brushes. And we help one reader take their painting skills to the next level in Art Class.

Issue 50 December 2009

It's our 50th issue and to celebrate we created a list of the most inspirational fantasy and sci-fi artists alive today. Andrew Jones provided us with the cover, and we also talk to Craig Mullins and James Gurney shares his secrets. Plus District 9 concept art!

Issue 54 March 2010

Pin-ups! Adam Hughes gives his top ten tips on how to paint beautiful females, and we look at the history of the art form, including the unique work of Sorayama. Plus create ZBrush beasts, learn how to paint on the fly, and Painter and Photoshop go head-to-head.

Issue 74 October 2011

It's the most influential film of all time, and in this special Star Wars issue we talk to the artists who worked on the Prequel Trilogy. Ralph McQuarrie reveals how he brought George Lucas's concepts to life, Iain McCaig paints Darth Maul, while Terryl Whitlatch draws creatures from a galaxy far, far away…

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LIVE IN THE UK? PLEASE TURN TO PAGE 95

Artist Q&A

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The FANTASY & SCI-FI DIGITAL ART ImagineFX panel

Paco Rico Torres
Paco is a freelance illustrator living in Spain who's painted for several card games, magazines, books and role-playing games.
pacorico.blogspot.com

Mark Facey
Mark is a freelance illustrator and concept artist with a love for creatures and world building. He lives in the Midlands, England.
creaturejournal.tumblr.com

Kev Crossley
Kev is an experienced concept artist, providing unique character designs, storyboards and environment art for the games industry.
kevcrossley.com

Jeremy Enecio
Jeremy is an award-winning, New York-based illustrator. His many clients include Tor Books, Playboy and Wizards of the Coast.
jenecio.com

Charles Guan
Charles has worked for many clients from fashion, print, TV and film, but much of his regular work features in the video games industry.
fantasticfunmachine.blogspot.com

Brynn Metheney
Brynn was raised in the Mojave desert and moved to the Bay Area of California in 2006. Creature and animal illustrations are her forte.
brynnart.com

Sam Brown
Sam left the University of Cincinnati with a degree in Industrial Design, and works at San Francisco's Massive Black as a concept artist.
sambrown36.blogspot.com

Question
How can I improve my figure drawing?
Carrie Matthews, UK

Answer
Paco replies

The first step to properly draw or paint the human figure is to observe the human body itself. So you need to study anatomy (muscles and bones), and to do a lot of life drawing. If you can't draw from a model, photographic references can do the trick.

The key is to really look at the same time as you practise. If you just do one drawing after another without thinking, you won't progress. The point of learning about the human body is to get rid of all the preconceived ideas we have on representing it, which makes our work look naïve. Pay attention to the volume that's generated by the lights and the shadows, proportion, perspective and expression.

If the colours give you trouble, you can create a document with various colours to use as a palette. It speeds the process up.

If you need a little motivation to practise, how about introducing a theme to your doodles to make the process more entertaining?

Besides anatomy study and life drawing, you can try an exercise that's pretty useful when it comes to learning proportion and expression, and is also a good warm-up exercise. It consists of doing lots of quick paintings (between 30 minutes and an hour) of people, focusing on depicting the anatomy. They don't need to be highly realistic, but at least correct (don't hesitate to use references). The aim is to learn new drawing techniques, not to produce masterpieces, so don't worry if they look rough. Just focus on learning about the figure, spotting your own mistakes and then trying to get rid of them.

Try to do one a day and I guarantee that you'll notice an improvement!

Step-by-step:
Improve your figure painting quickly

1 Open a document in Photoshop and with the basic hard brush, sketch a 'skeleton' of what you're about to paint. Even if you already know what to paint or you are just improvising, it's still good to use references. However, don't just mindlessly copy the references – try to understand them!

2 Once you have the skeleton, paint the figure's silhouette with a base colour on a new layer. By just painting the silhouette you won't be distracted by details, and you'll be more focused on proportion and expressivity. Flipping the canvas horizontally from time to time will help you spot mistakes easily.

3 Finally, paint the internal structure of the figure inside the silhouette. Use references if you aren't sure about something. Remember: if you never ask a question, you'll never get an answer. Afterwards, spend a little time looking at what you painted, analyse it, judge it and try to learn something from the experience.

Question
How do I paint realistic scenes of water meeting the land, such as a sandy beach?
James Kean, US
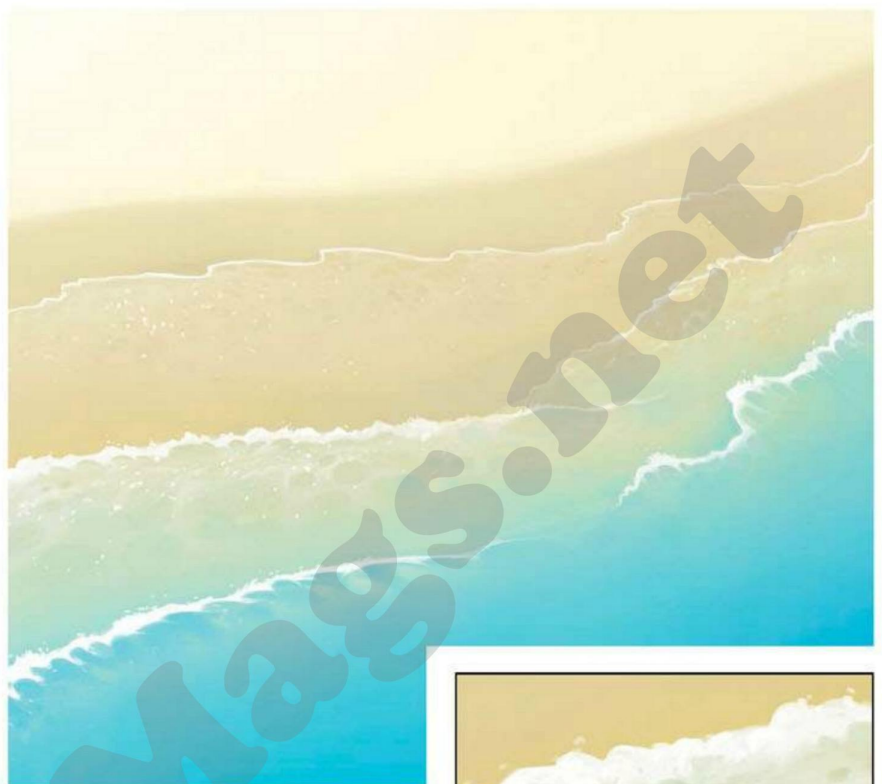
The smooth gradient moving from a sandy yellow to a dark blue imply depth, while the waves and froth define the surface of the water.

Answer
Mark replies

When painting water, what you're actually doing is rendering the light that's being reflected back from above and below its surface. Depending on depth, clarity and the surfaces that it covers, the variation in colour and transparency can change quite a bit.

For example, with a sandy beach scene you will want to have a smooth gradient for the sand as it gently slopes down beneath the surf. In such an example, the true colour of the water gradually becomes darker and more intense because less light is able to reach to the bottom. Furthermore, with details such as froth and ripples defining the general shape and form of the water's surface, the colours and smooth gradients beneath will give it a deep and translucent visual effect. Remember, as waves spread further up an inclined sandy beach, they gradually become smaller.

Another thing that you can add is a tide line: a darker, wet part of the sand where the water has just been able to reach before receding back. The shallower parts of water that reach the tide line are like thin sheets of glass, almost completely invisible, with only a sharp line of white froth along the edge giving them form.

Here I used the Eraser tool to erase circles in a thin layer of surface froth to give the surface a bubbly look.

## Artist's secret
CREATE A HANDMADE GRADIENT

Instead of using Photoshop's Gradient tool for the sand, I like to manually blend my colours together using gentle strokes with very soft-edged brushes. This allows for far more control over the colour transitions, resulting in a less sterile gradient.

ImagineNation Artist Q&A

Question
Do you have any tips for making vehicles look solid?
David Patel, England
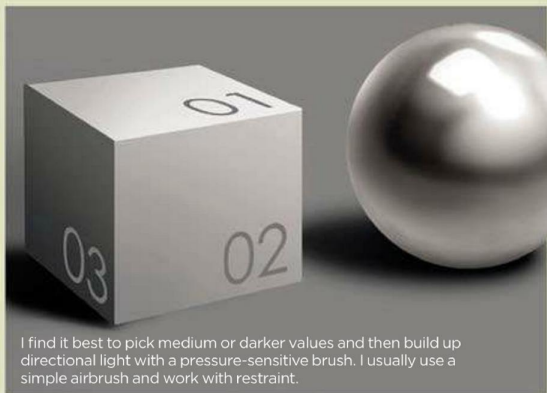
I find it best to pick medium or darker values and then build up directional light with a pressure-sensitive brush. I usually use a simple airbrush and work with restraint.

Answer
Sam replies

This comes down to communicating form in a real manner. It's easier when you break it down into primitive shapes. For example, when you're rendering cubes, the three visible surfaces are each going to have different values.

My example here is lit from above, so the top surface has the lightest gradient. The surface numbered 02 is darker, and 03 even more so. The numbers on each surface are all the same value of grey – they just look different relative to the value of the surface. When you think of this in terms of vehicle design, for example, just keep each side of the vehicle within the proper gradient according to the light source.

Having an understanding of a sphere can help if you're adding curves to a vehicle design. When you're rendering metallic spheres, you have to take into account the location that the sphere is in. I render my sphere here as if it's in a simple room. The upper portion reflects the walls and ceiling of the room, while the lower section reflects the table it's sitting on. Knowing this – and practising, of course – can aid your designs no end.

Artist's secret

USING LAYERS

When rendering form, I find using a Color Dodge layer helps when figuring out lighting. Create a new layer and select the Color Dodge blend mode. Double-click the layer: you'll see the Blend Clipped Layers as Group and Transparency shapes Layer boxes are checked. Uncheck those boxes and click OK.

Question
How do I paint the same scene from a different perspective?
Abby Jackson, Australia
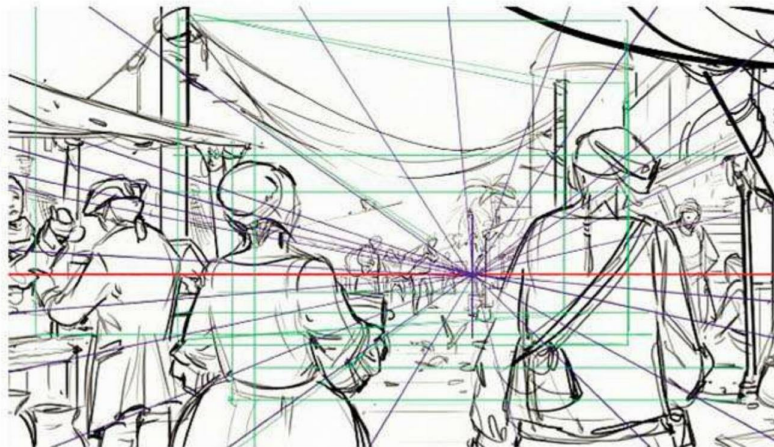

Answer
Charles replies

To start, I create a master shot to rotate. I draw it in a top-down view to help visualise the space. I also create a perspective grid for measuring the relationships of objects.

I measure distance in the painting by connecting the ground contact point of an object, following the perspective grid to the next closest ground object. For height, I simply draw upwards to the top of an object and define relationships in the distance by drawing through in perspective from both the ground and top of the object.

To create the second shot, I focus on laying out the big objects in the scene first, such as walls and the ground. From there I start drawing one item at a time to use as

Using the master shot (below) I'm able to make judgements about the height of objects in relation to each other. The more objects you put in a scene, the easier it is to make these measurements.
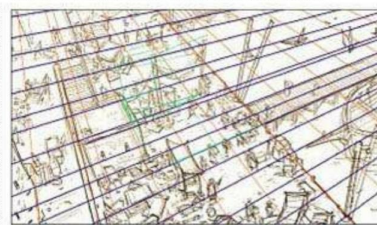
The master shot: notice how the orange always follows the horizon line and vanishing points, and continues up to help define height relationships.

an anchor for measuring distance from one to another. Most important is defining where objects are sitting on the ground plane. The more objects in a scene relate to each other, the easier the process becomes.

Question
I want to create an alien landscape that feels real – how do I achieve this?
Naomi Baker, US

Answer
Brynn replies

Making an alien landscape feel real starts with landscapes here on Earth – we can use what we can see to inform our paintings.

For my painting, I want to create a rocky, desert-inspired landscape. Looking at deserts in Utah, Arizona and the Gobi Desert, I can see how wind and rain affect rock and how they might carve the stone and shape the sand. Using atmospheric perspective, I push the depth of the piece.

It's also important to consider lighting. The sun in my piece is bright, but because of the dense atmosphere, it might not be

Use references to paint elements the viewer will be familiar with, but use unusual colours and compositions to create a familiar but alien world.
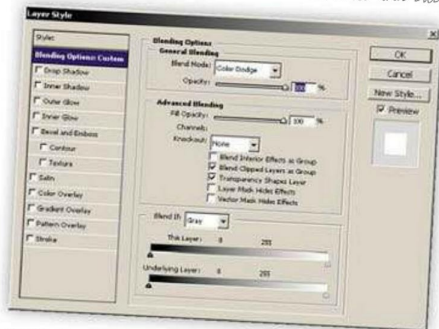

a strong light source. Adding further elements such as bizarre-looking plants and a large planet in the distant sky helps make the landscape feel otherworldly.

Question
What's the best way to paint over thumbnails?
Kelvin Thomas, US

Answer
Kev replies

When I'm preparing concept sketches for a video game, movie or comic, the resulting thumbnails are small, numerous and can be quite sketchy and rough. The best approach is to attack them quickly, without too much emphasis on adding any polish. Thumbnails must communicate ideas efficiently; polished presentation is a secondary consideration!

I scan a pencil thumbnail of a monster head into Photoshop, then create a layer above it with the mode set to Multiply. Into this layer I quickly paint a base colour of mid-brown using a soft brush with 70 per cent opacity. A darker, reddish shade is used to add depth to the shadowed areas.

This stage takes a few minutes and results in a tonal base painting. Next, onto the same layer I paint an unhealthy green over the head, describing the skin tone but retaining the darker areas. The colour is applied quickly with a medium-sized, medium-opacity soft brush, without too much thought for keeping inside the lines. Speed and spontaneity are important here!

A touch of scarlet is painted into and around the mouth and teeth, but I allow the brush to trail scratchy veins over the skin, adding freeform spatters and spots as I go. A little pink is added to bolster the red and add depth to the green of the skin, before a pale, greyish yellow is used to pick out the teeth and the lighter areas of skin. Finally, little spots of near-white pick out the highlights.

The loose and lively nature of the thumbnail is preserved and complemented by the application of colour tones and highlights using quick, expressive brush strokes.

Artist's secret

SET LAYER TO MULTIPLY

Colour added to a Multiply layer above a line drawing is useful as it enables the drawing to show through. The layer can then be duplicated and amended easily if colour variations or styles are required, while preserving the line art.

Step-by-step: Painting a 'known' alien world

1 I've start with a pretty basic landscape here, only focusing on the rock and the atmospheric perspective. Using references from various deserts and rocky environments here on Earth, I begin to get a good feel for what a similar alien landscape would look like.

2 I add a large planet in the sky to ensure that the landscape feels less like Earth. The colour of the sky and rock are crucial elements in the image too. Playing with the viewer's perceptions in this way can make an alien environment still feel familiar.

3 Finally, I focus on populating the world with odd-looking plants and tiny, drifting seed pods. This helps to sell the planet's history and develop a narrative for the view. Again, they're elements known to the viewer, but placed in an unusual setting and colouring.

Question
How can I make my vehicle designs stand out from the crowd?
Riley Gardner, US

Answer
Sam replies

Vehicles' designs are made of basic shapes, each of which can affect the impression and purpose of your design. When designing armoured vehicles, for example, an aggressive and powerful look can be achieved in various ways. You can have a vehicle with either angular surfaces or organic shapes and both can have a strong look. A lot of that comes from the stance and overall balance of the shapes.

I want the stance of this vehicle to have a strong rear end so I keep a lot of horizontal lines back there. Assigning it four wheels at the back also gives it a strong foundation. To contrast this, I draw interesting shapes on the front end to push the vehicle forward. This attracts the eye and gives

> The stance and shape of a vehicle can make it feel aggressive, leaving you free to experiment with its chassis.

forward momentum. With the front end of the vehicle, I tried to integrate the cab, body and grill plate in a way that ties things together. The front end is pretty much the face of the vehicle, and another area that can help push its overall aggressiveness.

With these things in mind, you can play with different proportions to design various kinds of armoured vehicles.

Step-by-step: Design an aggressive-looking vehicle

1 Here's the base model in SketchUp, a program that enables you to build a solid structure to work from. I start with a side-view sketch and extrude the silhouette. I then add detail and more shape to the body, drawing lines, and pushing and pulling shapes. Once you have your base body shape, you can add details. I now move into Photoshop to paint design variations.

2 This is one of the early variations I made to paint on top of my model. It's a little bit all over the place, but it shows that you shouldn't be too worried about deviating from your base. I try to keep things pretty loose at this point. Because the base is a 3D model, it's easy to see how the lighting works, and your perspective is all here.

3 Here's where things start to come back together in the paintover portion of the process. I go back to some of the original things I had on the base model, such as the door placement. If you have other vehicle models, you can set them up in the same perspective and lighting as your other model, so you can easily copy and paste portions to use in your painting process.


4 I try some new stuff on the front end. If this were for a client, I'd present these as front-end variations for one of my concepts. I choose the new option and add more details for the final image. When finishing, look at photos and pay attention to proportions and user interaction. It's always good to have function in mind when designing things that people are going to use.

Question
What's the best way to paint the effect of wet stone?
Sarah Halderman, US
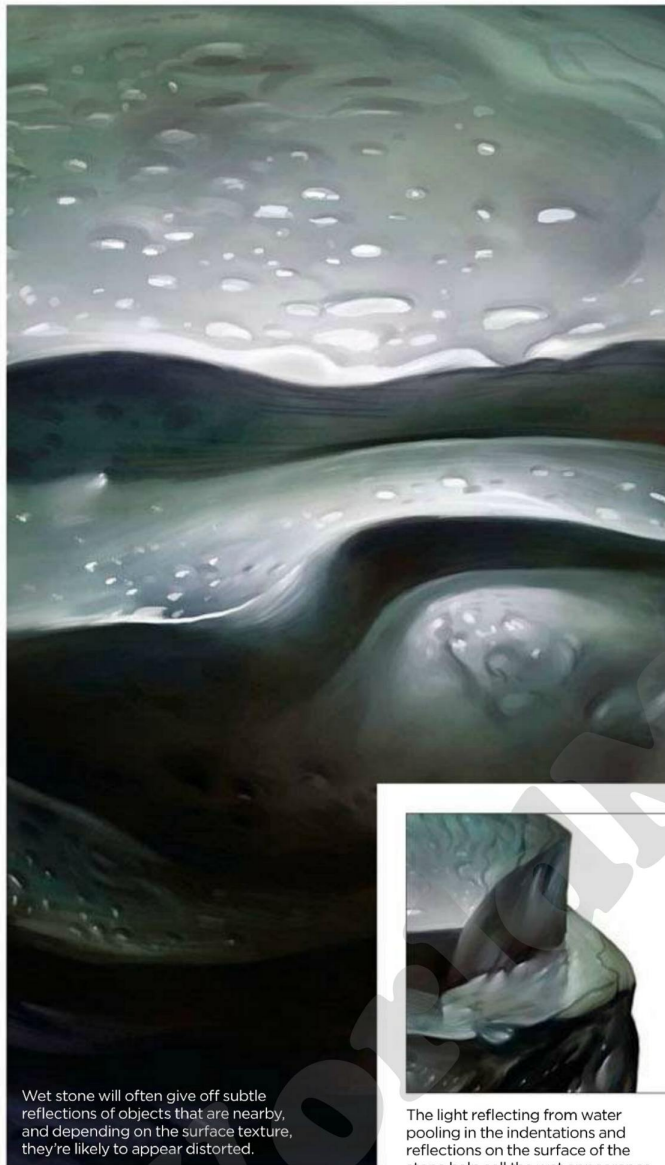
Wet stone will often give off subtle reflections of objects that are nearby, and depending on the surface texture, they're likely to appear distorted.

The light reflecting from water pooling in the indentations and reflections on the surface of the stone help sell the wet appearance.

Answer
Mark replies

Painting wet stone can be tricky, with factors such as lighting, texture, colour and the shape of the stone having a huge effect on how the surfaces look. A smooth, round pebble would appear almost glass-like, whereas a lot of the shine would be dulled on a rough masonry wall.

Usually the first thing that happens to stone when it gets wet is that it darkens. With that in mind, I paint this boulder as if it were dry and then go over it with light green and blue on a Multiply layer. Not only does this darken it, but it also gives it a nice, mossy green hue, which further helps imply that it's a damp surface.

Once you're happy with the underlying colours, you should start adding areas that catch the light. You need to make sure that the highlights reflect the colour of the surrounding light. Paint the brightest spots where the layer of water gathers the most, such as in small pools or where it's present in cracks and along edges.

Question
How do I create the impression of bone pushing through flesh?
Tom Manning, US

Answer
Kev replies

I begin by drawing a hunk of flesh with rib-shards piercing the surface. After scanning the drawing into Photoshop, I add a base colour of blue using a medium opacity brush set to Multiply. Over this, I use a diffuse brush to add a flesh hue. The skin colour is built up using lighter and lighter tones.

Close attention is paid to the area of skin torn by the bone. A wound of this kind would leave skin ragged, with the pinkish interior layers exposed and slightly protruding. In time, blood clotting beneath the surface would create a patina of yellow bruising around the wounds, darkening to bluish black, so these colours are softly suggested around the bones.

Finally, I add daubs of pale flesh and white to suggest the highlights caused by blood and other fluids.
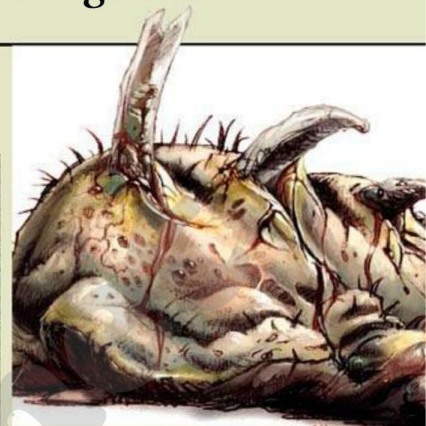
The fractured bones that pierce the flesh leave ragged, uneven tears in the skin, which begins to discolour and turn yellow. The pink interior fat shines as if wet.

After the sketch is scanned into Photoshop, I apply an undercoat of greyish blue. This will add depth to the final colouring.

Question
What are the best brushes to doodle with digitally?
Nina Baker, Australia

Answer
Jeremy replies

Just like with sketching or doodling with natural media, the materials are simple, whether it be pencil, charcoal or whatever. Most of the time I use only a Hard Round brush with pressure sensitivity for size and opacity. Lately, however, I've added a bit of texture to the brush too: in the Brush Preset manager, turn on the Dual Brush option. This keeps the shape of the brush the same, but adds a secondary texture as you put less pressure on the stylus. This gives the otherwise smooth digital surface a bit of graininess, which is good if you enjoy sketching with charcoal. If you're the pen-and-ink type, try the Hard Round brush, but uncheck Other Dynamics in the Brush Preset manager.

However you work, experiment with the brush options until you get the natural feel you're after.

Here are a few types of brushes that I use for sketching in Photoshop: simple and boring, so the drawing is forced to speak for itself.

An example of a Photoshop sketch. The texture is subtle, but that's just my aesthetic.

Question
What's the simplest way to invent new poses for my characters?
Gwen Walters, US

Keep the points at a similar distance from each other to make it easier. Avoid repeating poses, even if various sets of points look the same.

Answer
Paco replies

Pretty much the only two 'easy ways' to improve your ability to imagine and depict a wide spectrum of poses are practise and observation.

Always be observant. The streets are full of people posing, so just go outside and take a look at the people. Try to spot varied poses, try to remember them and paint them when you get home, or simply carry with you a small sketch pad and roughly draw all the fancy poses that you see. And of course, the internet is an unlimited source of reference material.

Remember that the point of looking for references is not to just copy them, but to study them. The goal is to understand the nature of the poses and movements and to 'feed' your imagination with real-life examples. Eventually, you'll be able to imagine any pose for your characters and depict them properly.

An interesting way to practise and to imagine new poses is to put four random points on the canvas and try to paint a figure posing in a way that their feet, knees, hip and shoulders matches with each point. It's fun to do and is also a great exercise!

If you understand how the human skeleton works, you'll find it much easier to depict any pose you may imagine.

Artist's secret

LOOSEN UP

Software like Poser, where you can easily create and manipulate a 3D human mannequin, can be helpful, but try not to rely too much on these kinds of references because they're usually a bit stiff and unnatural.

Question
How do I easily draw imaginary creatures?
Jamie Potter, England

Answer
Brynn replies

The task of drawing imaginary creatures can be much simpler if you break them down into basic shapes. Thinking about complex structures in a planar view can help you to see them simply and keep you from feeling overwhelmed.

Of course, when tackling the details, such as an imagined canine-type jaw, it's always a good idea to study the canine skull itself and use references. Books, photos, the zoo and actual bones can give you a feel of what a jaw would look like at different angles. Taking my example and looking at canines, watching them yawn, snarl and pant will help with expression.

For my two creatures pictured here, I sketch out their heads using box shapes. This helps with the perspective of the jaws, as well as the positioning of the eyes and teeth. After I've sketched in the boxes, I add in definition such as fur, eyes, teeth and ears.

I always sketch things in lightly (on separate layers) so I can easily move things around to make sure the proportions are right. It's always a good idea keep your shape sketch handy to refer back to while you're working.

Here you can see a rough box sketched over the creature's jaws. This will keep me on track with shape, perspective and placement of other features.

Question
How can I add personality to my vehicle designs?
Jon Denby, England

Answer
Charles replies

An easy way to add personality to any object is to paint unique details that tell stories, such as decals on a military vehicle. However, it's important that such details are in keeping with the vehicle's purpose.

I start with thumbnail sketches to generate ideas, before taking my favourite thumbnail into Photoshop to flesh out ideas, forms and the mechanics of the mech, all the while keeping the art relatively loose yet structurally sound. Using the rough mech concept sketch with no decals, I make a sheet with some duplicate layers of the sketch to try out different decal ideas. Coming up with scenarios and a narrative for the mech drives the decal design process; I consider military, futuristic and sporting situations.

I then apply the decals with broad brushstrokes to test possible concepts. The broad stroke decals are mainly shapes to either completely cover up or break up the shapes on the outer panel surfaces. Shape design is the focus, complementing the decal shapes and their arrangements with the shapes that are already established in the mech concept sketch.

When I'm happy with the shapes and arrangements of the decals, I add smaller decals for accents, scale, functionality and believability. When a design is ready to take to a final presentation, I revert back to my previous sketch to finalise and focus on fleshing out the mech design fully, before adding in the final decals at the very end.

Decals can help to describe a narrative for a design. It's always fun to play with different themes by using shapes, colours and patterns.

For the final mech design, I simplified the forms, refined the mechanics, and went with a futuristic police theme for the decals.

Artist's secret
PLAY AROUND WITH THE BASE COLOUR OPTIONS
A good way to start exploring a variety of decals is by changing the base colour of the mech. By doing so, it inspires me to explore different colour schemes more often then not, and at times it can also trigger ideas for themes.

Step-by-step: Designing a mech with details and decals in mind

1 First, I sketch a final mech design. I'm only focusing on the forms and mechanics at this stage, prior to any decal applications. It's much easier to handle the industrial design of the mech without having to paint and repaint decals. From trying out some decal ideas in the roughs, I already know the theme and colour scheme I'm going for.
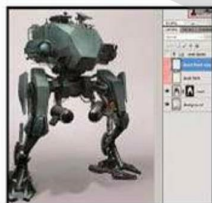
2 I create a layer mask for separating the mech from the background, to help retain my edges. The layer blend mode I'm using is Overlay, although Softlight, Color and Color Dodge can get some cool results. I play with broad decal placements and shapes on the panel surfaces, following the contours to help the forms read and pop.

3 Finally, I apply smaller decals and accents. I try to balance their location and scale so that they work as a whole, especially when using accent colours. I like researching, creating and using small informational decals to scatter around appropriate areas of the mech for functionality, believability and strengthening the narrative.

Got a digital art problem? Is an image giving you art-ache? Our panel can help. Email your question to our experts at **help@imaginefx.com** or write to **Artist Q&A, ImagineFX, 30 Monmouth St, Bath, BA1 2BW, UK.**

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RISING STARS
2011

We reveal the 10 artists who have excited and impressed us the most in our search for the best young talent

here aren't many opportunities to put your work under the nose of award-winning art directors from across the publishing, video games, comic and film industries, but Rising Stars does just that.

The 300-plus artists who entered this year's competition had the chance to be seen and judged by five leading figures from their industries, as well as the team behind ImagineFX.

Our second year of holding the Rising Stars campaign has left us in awe of the sheer wealth of talent that entered. Whether using traditional methods or digital software, painting portraits, concepts or environments, our final 10 artists all impressed.

If you didn't make it into this year's top 10, don't give up. The old saying rings true for Rising Stars: 'it's the taking part that counts'. Your art has been seen, your portfolio is stronger, and there's always next year! ➤➤

THE PANEL

IRENE GALLO
As art director at Tor books, Irene helps develop talented new artists and works with some of the world's leading illustrators.
tor.com

KEVIN JENKINS
The Framestore director's art department has an impressive CV, not least because it features his BAFTA- and Oscar-nominated VFX work.
framestore-cfc.com

SAM DIDIER
One of Blizzard's longest-serving employees, Sam has a track record for spotting new artists on Blizzard forums and turning them into pros.
blizzard.com

JON SCHINDEHETTE
Senior art director for Wizards of the Coast, Jon ensures that the designs for all Dungeons & Dragons projects fit together.
wizards.com/dnd

MARK CHIARELLO
As art director at DC Comics, Mark Chiarello sees a lot of new artists' work and has plenty of experience championing rising stars of comics.
dccomics.com

BLOSSOM
This is a woman who's come to terms with her suffering. "I settled on cherry blossoms blending with her chest to reveal the intricacy of her soul."

BREAKABLE
Inspired by the work of William Bouguereau, Breakable is modelled on one particular painting by the artist: Au Bord du Ruisseau.

CAGED
Anna's favourite part of surreal fantasy portrait Caged is the character's eyes: "I feel they make her gaze piercing, yet lost," she explains.

ANNA DITTMANN

Anna's dreamy, atmospheric portrait work is inspired by everything from picture books to vintage photos

LOCATION Georgia, US **WEB** escume.deviantart.com **AGE** 18

ON THE DVD

ARTIST'S TOOLS

PHOTOSHOP

SOFT OVAL BRUSH

I rely heavily on this: it provides a certain amount of softness, without sacrificing texture.

CHALK BRUSH

I use this to block in the background colour, but it's great at adding texture too.

STREAKY BRUSH

I use this minimally to detail individual strands of hair, and for skin pores and imperfections.

ARTIST'S ADVICE

DRAW DAILY
"Draw every day. Try to create something, even if it's just a doodle. By constantly practising, you'll improve. I like looking back at all my old drawings: seeing those cringeworthy efforts is a great boost to my confidence."

On the day we catch up with Anna Dittmann, she's set to make the move from her hometown of San Francisco to study at Savannah College of Art and Design in Georgia, an experience she hopes will take her already impressive skills to the next level.

"My style's somewhat dreamy. Early on, I discovered that through art I can make my ridiculous, far-fetched thoughts a reality," explains the young artist, who specialises in beautifully delicate portraits. "I love depicting characters and capturing emotion," she adds. "I often try to incorporate a concept and a back-story to add a fantastical element to my pieces. Ethereal and atmospheric environments appeal to me because of the sense of mystery they evoke, so I tend to create soft pieces with muted but colourful palettes."

Anna has been doodling ever since she could hold a pen, and delighted her parents by scrawling on the walls. She's since upgraded her toolkit to a Wacom Intuos 3 and Photoshop CS3, but that passion for drawing has never abated.

"As a child, I drew inspiration from picture books," she recalls. "I was fascinated by the stories but found the images were more meaningful than the words. Now, eye-catching advertisements, vintage photographs and even the most trivial things shape my art. Right now, I feel very inspired by the Pre-Raphaelite artists."

Many of Anna's pieces begin as "random late-night doodles" and evolve from there, but others are more carefully planned out, starting with a broad concept, then a rough compositional sketch, before deciding on a colour scheme and lighting.

"Once this is set up, I start detailing the face and expression," she says. "The face is my favourite area to paint: I love the diversity of colour and texture to be found in facial features."

Anna reveals that she would love to pursue a career in digital art. "I've always wanted to earn a living doing something I'm passionate about," she grins. "I don't really know where I'm going yet, but I'm excited about the future!"

> **There's something about the eyes in many of Anna's portraits. Whether they're based on real people or not doesn't matter, because they all seem to be real** Mark Chiarello

GUARDIAN
"The inspiration for Guardian is simple," says Anna. "I wanted to draw frogs, since I find them fascinating and rarely draw animals. I got the idea of a central protector who the frogs would gather around. I didn't want her face to look quite human, so I integrated it with the forest around her."

RIPPLE
"I began by drawing a pretty face, but the portrait seemed too stagnant," says Anna of Ripple. "I wanted to capture a sense of movement, as if someone had just paused a very turbulent moment. The billowing cloth proved particularly difficult to create, because I wanted it to feel both stylised and realistic."

TOBI TREBELJA

German artist Tobi blends his passion for nature, colour and traditional media with 3D software

LOCATION Hamburg, Germany **WEB** trebelja.com **AGE** 24

"I try to achieve the maximum effect with the minimum number of strokes," reveals Tobi Trebelja. He's an artist who draws a lot of inspiration from the natural world. "It's hard to imagine anything that nature couldn't top," he explains.

Tobi always carries a tiny sketchbook with him for when inspiration strikes, and he prefers a rough, sketchy aesthetic in his final pieces, leaving visible brush strokes in his images, rather than striving for a glossy finish.

Every piece he creates starts with a thumbnail sketch, which is then scanned to use as the basis for a greyscale speed painting with which he can establish shapes, perspectives and contrasts. "I often do a separate colour-mood in Corel Painter: it's much easier to fool around with colours when you don't have to worry about shapes," he reasons.

"After mixing those two together I go into detail, maybe add some stuff I didn't plan, and see where it gets me. I try not to work much longer than a week on one piece – otherwise there's a danger of overdoing it or, even worse, getting bored with it."

Self-taught from an early age in Photoshop and later Corel Painter, Tobi landed his first internship at the age of 13, which introduced him to 3D software. "It's helpful to have some basic 3D knowledge to pre-render complicated

> **66** Tobi's backgrounds are moody as hell! They're deep, dark and full of attitude – and most look like places I wouldn't want to hang around in for very long **99** Sam Didier

perspectives or shadows," he says. "I've also promised myself to take a look into traditional media like oil and acrylics, which I haven't done in a long time. I think it'll help me to understand the process of painting better, and train my focus on clean, organised working."

Back in 2001, the concept artwork from The Fellowship of the Ring prompted Tobi to dabble in watercolour painting for three years. "Then, at 18, I came back to digital media doing 2D/3D mix techniques," he reveals. "I always long to push my imagination as much as I push my technical skills. At the end of the day, I think that's what really matters."

ARTIST'S ADVICE
GO MAD!
"Sometimes the most wacko things that come into your mind are actually the best ideas when you have the guts to follow them until the end. But never lose your link to reality. Oh, and buy Color and Light by James Gurney. It's the freakin' bible!"

ON THE DVD
ARTIST'S TOOLS
PHOTOSHOP
I use a low-flow round brush and a palette-knife-shaped one.
PAINTER
I mostly use the Wet and Impasto Artists Oil brushes. Nozzles can also be a lifesaver.

TOBI'S PORTFOLIO

UBERMESSERSCHMITT
Having started life as a simple pencil sketch of an aeroplane, Ubermesserschmitt takes a classic design and goes "over the top" with it: "It ended up being so much fun that I pushed the borders more and more, and added a whole scene," reveals Tobi, who spent six days on it.

LOVEBOT

Lovebot came to Tobi at 3am, when he couldn't sleep. "To enhance the room's depth of field, I decided to broaden the frame a little on the left and give the robot a lower body reaching into the deep," he says. "Doing the polished surface and the fine mechanical parts underneath was fun."
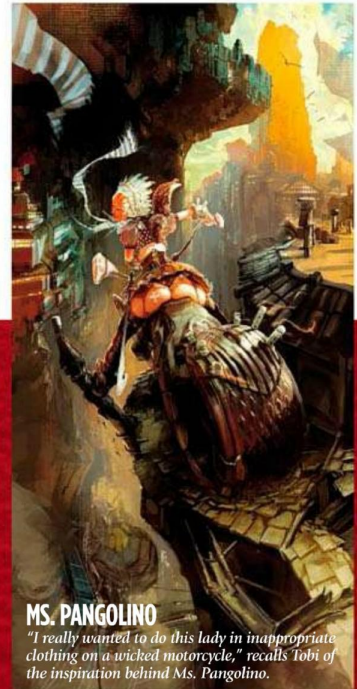
STREETSCENE WITH SHISHA

Tobi loves crowd scenes and Oriental settings, so this piece represented the perfect combination. He spent a long time searching for references for all the characters. "The guy in the foreground in the blue clothing is in fact me wearing a big towel!" he says.
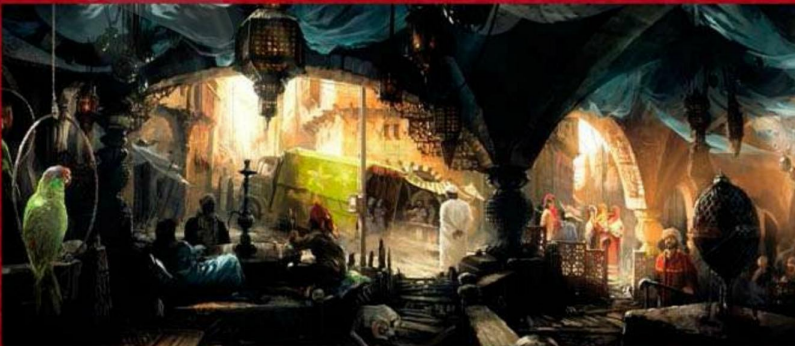
MS. PANGOLINO

"I really wanted to do this lady in inappropriate clothing on a wicked motorcycle," recalls Tobi of the inspiration behind Ms. Pangolino.

MCLEAN KENDREE

Even with high-profile projects under his belt, art is all about learning for McLean Kendree

MISTER MONDAY
"This image is a fan art of a young-adult book series by Garth Nix. I made this image when I wanted to do more young-adult illustration work," McLean says.

PARADE
"This is what happens when my love of pattern coincides with too much free time," McLean says.

Good artists never stop learning and although McLean Kendree is a graduate of the prestigious Ringling College of Art and Design in Sarasota, Florida, and has a growing list of clients in gaming and entertainment, he's still developing his style. "I'd say my stuff has a cartoony feel to it as far as fully painted illustrations go, both in the use of colour and the style of drawing," he says. "I'm working to get better at straight realism though, so that my style can be more of a choice and less of a default."

Over the last couple of years he's done several images for the Dungeons & Dragons franchise owned by Wizards of the Coast, including the front cover of the Hammerfast adventure which features a dwarven town. In addition to illustration, he also does concept art for a variety of

> **❝ He's unafraid to tackle unique approaches to colour. Bright and vibrant ❞**
> **Jon Schindehette**

projects. "I did some armour, weapons and a lot of environmental asset design for the upcoming Kingdoms of Amalur: Reckoning [from EA], and I learned a ton about designing objects that make a world feel lived-in," he says. "Right now I've got another cover for D&D I'm plugging away on, as well as Kemp Remillard's concept art project at the Safehouse Atelier – it's a redesign of the movie The Running Man. It should be a lot of fun once it's public!"

McLean's inspirations include the fantasy artists Paul Bonner and Justin Sweet, and painters such as John Singer Sargent and Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres. They're balanced by the influence of Dragon Ball Z and Final Fantasy during his childhood.

So how does it feel to be a rising star? "I am genuinely surprised," he says. "I know several awesome artists who didn't make it in this year, and regardless of who got accepted into what, I'm proud to know such smart, hard-working, creative people."

SHE-SPIDER
"This shows the relationship between the innocence of young girls versus the image magazines promote to them."

GRANDMOTHER
"An illustration of Hymir's Song, a Norse myth detailing Thor's attempt to retrieve a huge cauldron from a giant."

DUCAN SMITH

A comparatively late starter, this US artist is making up for lost time with his intricate, imaginative images

LOCATION Atlanta, Georgia, US **WEB** duncandraws.com **AGE** 25

Although he's just completing an MFA in illustration at the Savannah College of Art and Design, Duncan Smith wasn't always thinking about a career in art. "I picked it up as a second major because I wasn't enjoying anything else I was studying, and it soon became my only real focus," he says. "Now I'm hoping to break into the freelance market – I'm most interested in book illustration and album promotion."

Duncan's intricate, delicate scenes blend subtle fantasy influences with life studies. As spontaneous as they look, they're the result of careful preparation – he says he'll usually gather close to 100 reference photos before beginning. "I try to combine traditional pencil and charcoal drawings with ink splatters and watercolour," he explains, adding that he generally creates an ink layer and watercolour layer separately. The whole is then scanned

CAS CORACH
A T-shirt design based on the legend of Cas Corach, "an Irish musician who beheaded three werewolf-like creatures". It's pencil and ink, composited in Photoshop.

66 **There's a nostalgic feeling to Duncan's technique. It's good to see artists rediscovering older styles and adapting them for a modern palette** ❤ **Kevin Jenkins**

and adjusted in Photoshop. "To do the images 100 per cent traditionally would probably be less time-consuming, but also less readable," he reveals. And what of the recurring theme of nature in his pictures – is that deliberate? "It's probably more of a subconscious thing, to be honest," he says. "I do a lot of trees and birds in particular, because of the expressive qualities of wings and branches.

"There's also obviously a lot of symbolism associated with trees and birds, so I use them to convey feminism, wisdom, age and beauty."

ARTIST'S TOOLS

TRADITIONAL MEDIA

"I use a mix of watercolour brands, pencils, charcoal and ink, put down with brushes and G-nib pens. I use various types of charcoal and even conté crayon. I'm very open to using new brands or media."

ARTIST'S ADVICE

CHALLENGE YOURSELF

"Experiment with new media. Pushing yourself outside your comfort zone is a great way to learn a new approach, sensibility or mark-making strategy. At the very least, you could come up with some useful textures."

VOYAGE
Originally a simple anatomical study, Te decided to elaborate and add more story and texture to this image.

TE HU

Combining code and 3D with digital imagery created using traditional techniques, Te Hu is mixing things up with his art

LOCATION San Francisco, US   **WEB** web.me.com/huteford   **AGE** 24

66 This artist's work is wonderfully abstract mixed with originality. The cube images are particularly strong – Te has used a muted palette that suits his art well **99** Kevin Jenkins

At the age of 24, Te Hu is a Technical Artist working at EA's action games label Visceral in San Francisco. A few years ago, however, he was still living in his native China and had never even experienced digital art or CG.

"At that time I would play games and watch movies but didn't have anything to do with art," he says. "Gradually I discovered more about it, mainly through CGTalk and magazines such as Computer Arts. I couldn't buy ImagineFX then!" he laughs. "I already had a lot of experience with traditional art as both my parents are artists, so there's a real family influence."

In 2005 he started to study computer science and become fascinated by the way art could combine with code and 3D rendering to produce new forms – something he now incorporates into many of his images. But far from abandoning his traditional training, he's embraced it in this new format and has since been featured in Exotique, Exposé and Spectrum.

"I've had professional training in traditional art [Te attended China's Central Academy of Fine Arts], so the way I paint follows the classical oil painting steps, but in digital form," he explains. "My main influences are old European classical masters such as Waterhouse and Klimt, along with Renaissance masters. At the same time, there are some amazing digital artists around, such as Daniel Dociu, Feng Zhu, Kekai Kotaki and Marta Dahlig."

Te generally starts with an initial concept in ArtRage or Painter, "where I can get the 'brush stroke' feel", before moving on to work on the main image in Photoshop. He uses 3D, he says, to generate a form and structure that's abstract but beautiful: "For instance, I often use Maya to create and render objects which would be impossible for me to do by hand."

And his hopes for the future? "My goal is clear: to always go beyond myself, always try to be better, always try to find a new world in CG. I want to have my own style and really create inspired artwork that enlightens the whole world."

JOYMENTL
An abstract texture based on a childhood impression of the city of Dunhuang in the desert, "where we have tons of great art pieces".

THE GATE OF LIFE
Inspired by the Getty Museum and its architecture, most of this image is generated with code, with some matte painting on top.

DREAM FLOW NO.2
The second piece in Te's ambitious series, which complements Dream Flow No.1, shown on the following page.

DREAM FLOW NO.1
*Part of a series. "They're an expression of my
thoughts about this world of information…
eventually we'll be able to merge with this data."*
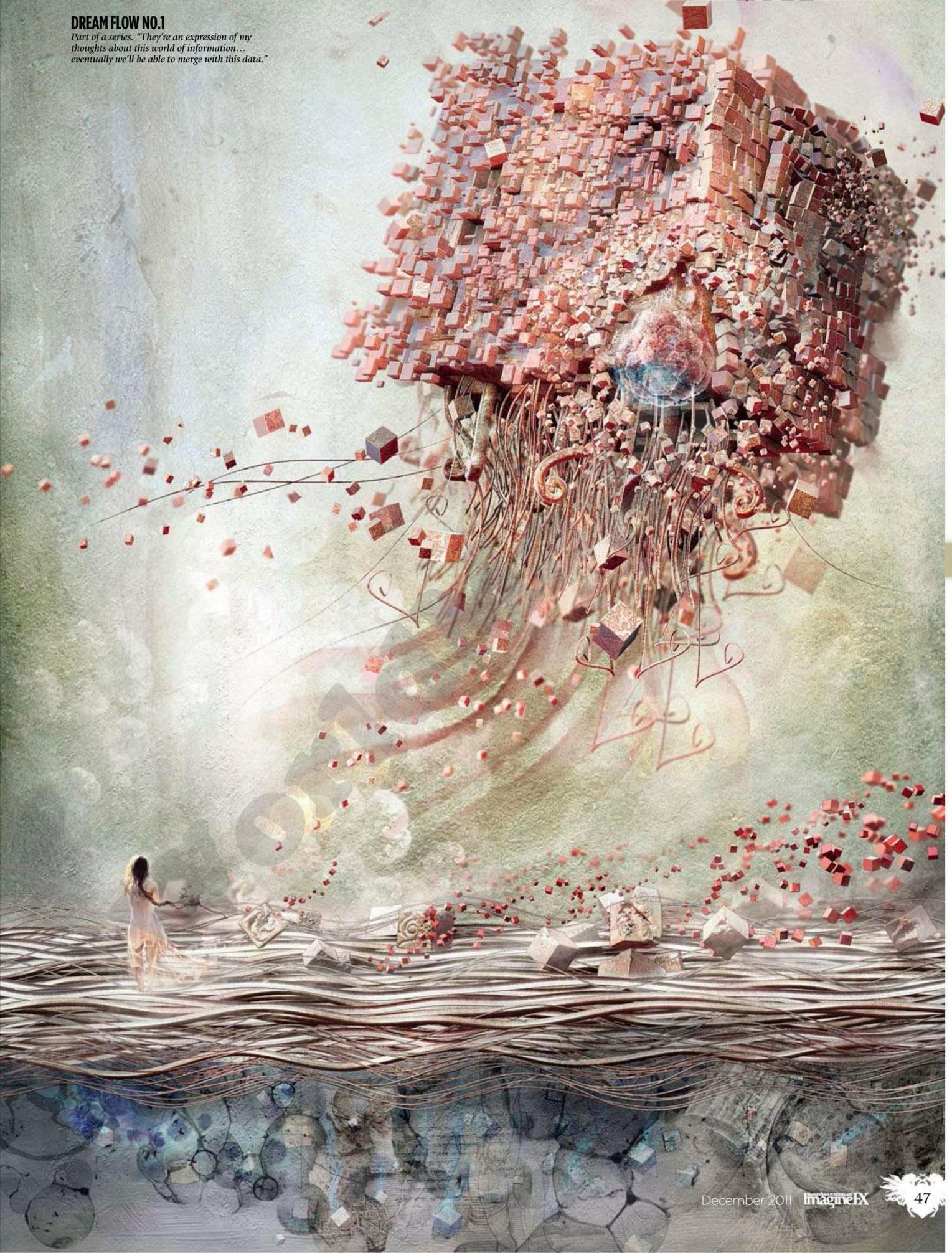
TRAN NGUYEN

Ambitious artist Tran is looking to take the art world by storm with her surreal and abstract images

LOCATION Georgia, US **WEB** pockypuu.blogspot.com **AGE** 24

"I feel like I've just won an endless supply of rice – ecstatic and blissful." That's what talented young artist Tran Nguyen said when we told her she'd been chosen as one of our Rising Stars.

Other than rice, Tran also focuses heavily on her art, which has a wonderful pencil-shaded quality to it. She achieves this through drawing on layers of acrylic glazing. As she builds up the layers, she develops a subtle variety of hues and a great amount of depth.

Her aim is to create therapeutic images. "My style is a personification of the human psyche, with a splash of surrealism and a pint of fantasy," she explains.

What you'll see in her work often comes from dreams, memories and emotions, and she's influenced as much by friends, family and strangers as by other artists. She's never afraid to mix in abstract or surreal elements, and this is sometimes even reflected in how she names her paintings. One has the fantastic (and fitting) title Living Parallel to an Infectious Pigment, and depicts a woman surrounded by lavish fabrics, disembodied parts of an owl and swirling squares that appear to be from another dimension.

Her first solo show took place in July and she enlisted the help of friends to paint floating triangles on the gallery walls to complement her drawings.

Some of Tran's favourite artists include Gustav Klimt, Edmund Dulac and Hayao Miyazaki, while her fantasy diet includes Final Fantasy, The Little Mermaid and Harry Potter.

Born in Vietnam but raised in America, Tran graduated from the respected Savannah College of Art and Design two years ago, and one of her aims is to conquer the world of art. She's already heavily involved in the gallery scene and has shown in Los Angeles, New York, Miami, London and Barcelona.

"I'm currently working on a two-person show in Seattle, a couple of group shows, then my third solo at Thinkspace Gallery in Los Angeles," she reveals.

ARTIST'S TOOLS

TRADITIONAL MEDIA

"I employ a rather time-consuming technique consisting of glazes and glazes of acrylic, topped with colour pencil to add that nice touch of detail. Paper is my preferable surface to work on, particularly printmaking paper. Put those two together and… ta-dah!"

> 66 **Tran's images remind me of when you dream of a familiar setting, but there's something different that you can't quite place. Her work is mesmerising** 99 **Claire Howlett**

TRAN'S PORTFOLIO

JUST ANOTHER OSCILLANT DEPOSITION
"Its focus is to personify the psyche as an ever-oscillating figure swaying back and forth, from one displacement to another, from one decision to the next," says Tran.

THE MAN WITH OCCUPIED HANDS
While the image might seem to focus on a man eating corn chips, it's really all about the abstract mind.

TREADING THROUGH AN UNTRIMMED MEMORY

In this image, Tran visits old memories and looks at how they become incoherent after being tucked away for years.

AND OUR WORLD CAME TUMBLING AFTER

"The act of holding yourself together, physically and mentally, is an arduous ordeal that sometimes can't resolve itself," explains Tran.

LIVING PARALLEL TO AN INFECTIOUS PIGMENT

Here the image deals with what happens inside us when we follow or deal with harmful ideas.
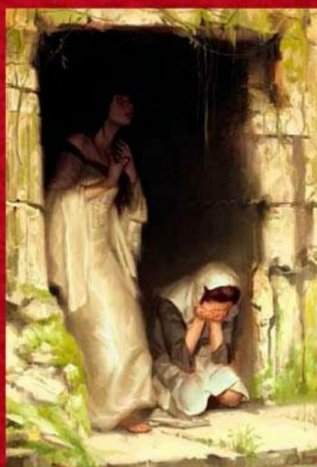
MAID_MALEEN

This image was inspired by a Brothers Grimm fairytale about a woman and her servant who are held captive in a tower for seven years.

UNTITLED 4

This image questions experimentation with the drug LDS in the 50s, 60s and 70s. "What occurred was psychological torture," says Karla.

TWO SOULS

This was inspired by a Brothers Grimm fairytale in which a man wearing a bearskin cheats the devil, gets rich and finds the girl of his dreams.

ARTIST'S ADVICE
LIVE FOR YOUR ART

"Paint what you see and not what you know, study nature, read art books and above all else, love what you do. There is nothing better than art, and all it takes to make good art is hard work and knowledge!"

ON THE DVD
ARTIST'S TOOLS
PHOTOSHOP: ROUND BRUSH

"I use the Round Brush as it's so versatile. Need an airbrush? Lower the hardness to 0. A drawing brush? Go to Brush Settings > Shape Dynamics and set a minimum diameter of 0%, lower the size of the brush to 3-4 pixels and you have a good drawing brush. Or you can use it as it is to render skin or cloth"

PROTOMAN

Fan art Karla created for a Capcom online competition about Medieval Mega Man. It was inspired by her love of both video games and medieval armour, the main character redesigned as a halberd knight.

KARLA ORTIZ

Karla Ortiz was born on Halloween, and with such figurative painting skills we are, frankly, a little scared

LOCATION San Francisco, California, US **WEB** karlaortizart.blogspot.com **AGE** 25

Looking at how accomplished Karla Ortiz is with the human form, it's really not surprising to find that this is one of her favourite subjects. She strives to express emotions not just in the faces of her characters, but through their gestures as well. A great deal of her subjects are uniquely posed too, and this just ramps up the challenges that she loves to overcome.

"For themes, I love things that are a bit spooky or odd," Karla says. "I also find contrasts in images fascinating, and not just in brightness and darkness but also happiness and sadness, life and death, or justice and oppression."

Like many of our Rising Stars, Karla has loved art since her childhood. She was inspired in school by a teacher and after high school went on to college but dropped out. Her dream of being an artist got on track again when she went to the Safehouse Atelier in San Francisco where she learned from Carl Dobsky, whom she includes among her inspirations. He's alongside the likes of John Singer Sargent, Anders Zorn, Jean-Léon Gérôme, Howard Pyle, Andrew Loomis, William Bouguereau, Ilya Repin, Diego Velázques, JC Leyendecker and many more.

Currently employed at the games publisher Kabam, Karla has previously worked for NCsoft and Ubisoft. One of the top projects she's worked on at Kabam has been The Godfather: The Five Families, which is an online version of Mario Puzo's world. "The team I work with are so talented and I've learned so much from them. I can also paint fedora hats from memory now!" she says.

Karla is looking forward to the next big show at the Safehouse Atelier, which is where she now teaches. "I also enjoy freelancing on the side and have worked on various book covers, miniature games and comics.

"In my free time I do plein air painting and oil paintings, play video games and play with my awesome cat, Keedy," she adds, before revealing that she'll soon be illustrating another comic.

❝ Dramatic and full of emotion, Karla's painting features strong composition and narrative ❞

Jon Schindehette

FIRST HUNT
Karla was inspired by the idea of a National Geographic cameraman photographing this strange pack in the wild when she created this painting.

DEEP BLUE
Jace's own take on the mermaid form, down in the silent depths with photon-emitting jellyfish.

EVERY NIGHT
'I wait for you, whoever you are', is the sentiment in the subtext of this image.

THE SILENT WORLD
As well as a love of depicting strong female forms, Jace is inspired by the art movements of the 1920s and 30s.

JACE WALLACE

Powerful female characters and expressive female forms are the key ingredients in this young artist's great portfolio

The classic 80s movies The Terminator and Alien both had strong female characters in them and, according to Jace Wallace, memories of those films still influence his art today. As you can see, he works with the female form a great deal, representing it in a variety of styles. (The movies also gave him a great love of science fiction and fantasy.)

"Female figurative work is a great subject to create concepts with," he says. "My images are generally not about the narrative, but creating a mood and emotion. The female form is perfect for this because the figure can convey just about any emotion I want. I use

> **66** Jace blends the old and the new in his technique and imagery. His work seems familiar and classical, yet oddly beautiful **99** Mark Chiarello

nudity to convey a sense of timelessness – clothing can confuse the idea. It sort of puts the figure in a blank slate."

A native of Huntingdon, Indiana, Jace studied at the Ringling College of Art and Design in Florida, but has since moved to Salt Lake City, Utah. At the moment he's creating concept art for The Sims 3 from Electronic Arts. Despite his preference for nudity, he designs clothing, and this has led him to consider working in fashion.

The artwork that inspires him the most dates back to the 1920s and 30s. "Art deco artists such as Tamara de Lempicka and Jean Gabriel Domergue are some of my favourites. Also, Range Murata has great art deco-inspired art I adore," he says.

On top of the concept work for EA, Jace has done several book covers and game projects. You can see some of his work developing online at his Livestream site, and chat with him about his techniques – visit livestream.com/wakkawa.

SQUAWK OF THE SHADOW
This image depicts a man approaching an Arabic city on a camel. Mateusz built a rough 3D model of the city in order to get the shadows spot on.

MATEUSZ OZMINSKI

A trained architect with an eye for composition, this Polish artist has learned to put a strong story before meaningless visual trickery

LOCATION Poznan, Poland **WEB** artozi.deviantart.com **AGE** 24

ON THE DVD

ARTIST'S BRUSHES

PHOTOSHOP

CUSTOM BRUSHES: PRIMARY

Gives control in the early stages. For sketching I disable pressure sensitivity and set to 2 pixels.

CHALKY CLOUD

My standard filling brush: I switch between this one and the simple default brush.

MIRACLE DOTS

I can't imagine a better brush for texturised fog, which I often use for dust.

INCA TRAIL DAY 2

I use this to create random textures. For interesting patterns, use big and erase a lot.

MOON 1

This brush is great for painting dirt, organic shapes and irregularities: I rarely leave it not overpainted.

To engage your audience as a digital artist, argues Mateusz Ozminski, you must approach a painting from two different angles. "The first is abstract: shapes, values, composition, colour – all of them technicalities," explains the recent architecture graduate. "The second concerns the content: the idea, ideology, story, gestures and so on."

Mateusz first came across Photoshop when dabbling in web design as a teenager, and it's now his tool of choice for digital painting as well. But before firing up the computer, his process usually begins in a quiet room with his eyes shut to dream up a concept. "I then draw ugly brainstorm charts with words connecting to each other," he explains. "Looking at words is much less committing than line for me."

In a structured development process, Mateusz then moves on to thumbnails of the full composition, followed by poses, character features and particular details. "By the time I move to digital I generally know what's going on," he reveals. "A single piece can take anywhere from four hours, where it looks fresh and sketchy, to 30 hours, where everything is sharp and shiny."

> ❝ This has great lighting and a wonderful sense of scale. The use of the wide angle lens adds a sense of drama and scope ❞ **Kevin Jenkins**

MARTA NAEL

With influences as diverse as Impressionism and The Lord of the Rings, Marta loves to play with mood, colour and movement

LOCATION Barcelona, Spain   **WEB** martanael.daportfolio.com   **AGE** 23

With an art style that was described by one of her tutors as a "game of light and colour", the distinctive approach that Marta Nael developed at college has since made a transition from traditional to digital media.

"I felt I had to jump to digital rather than just being a Bohemian artist," smiles the Fine Art graduate."

It was a piece of Lord of the Rings concept art by Dylan Cole that first stoked this desire in Marta. "I wanted to learn how to do that," she explains, "so I looked at lots of tutorials and just started teaching myself."

While Marta counts iconic painters such as Friedrich, Turner and Rembrandt among her artistic heroes, she also admires present-day commercial digital artists such as Dan Luvisi, Jonas de Ro, Maciej Kuciara, Marek Okon and Raphael Lacoste.

Despite having grown up with a paintbrush, Marta now swears by her old Wacom Graphire 4 when it comes

ARI
Concept art of a femme fatale for Dark Ride Studios' game Evil Spell (since shelved): "She's a mysterious, seductive woman," says Marta.

MAGIC CASTLE
This image started as a concept sketch at a manga con in Madrid. "I wanted to portray a place lost in space and time, but full of magic."

PHOENIX
Marta's first realistic painting of a woman took 40 hours. "I tried to make her look fragile and delicate, staring into space," she explains.

66 Attitude and beauty. Insanely gorgeous women and jaw-dropping environments. Each piece is easily worth framing and gazing upon for days. Great work! 99 **Sam Didier**

to creating her own artwork and works primarily in Photoshop CS4 Extended.

"Unlike many artists, I don't like to start with a line sketch," she reveals. "Lines mean less freedom and the result is always less fresh."

Her landscape pieces begin as areas of black and white to indicate light and shadow, while she blocks out her 'digital impressionist' portraits in colour to explore mood and movement. "I always start by shading the whole canvas with a neutral colour, then define surfaces by adding colour with thick strokes," Marta says. "I believe sketches can also be seen as

final artworks: sometimes it can be more interesting to keep a drawing rough and unfinished, rather than keep working on it and risk losing the fresh and spontaneous look, or the painterly feeling."

Marta's day job involves painting fantasy and sci-fi landscapes and illustrations for a publisher, where she enjoys the freedom to push her style in new directions. "I'd love to work for the film and games industry as a concept artist, or a matte painter for a huge fantasy and sci-fi film," she says. "I'll keep painting every day, showing my work as much as possible and learning from others to try to achieve that."

ARTIST'S ADVICE
BE INSPIRED BY OTHERS

"What makes me improve the most is looking at others' work and trying to understand how they achieve what they achieve. Being willing to improve is important too: you should never be satisfied. Press yourself, and believe in yourself."

Eva Widermann

Expressive faces and strong poses abound in Eva Widermann's eclectic character designs

Artist PROFILE

Eva Widermann

Born in Munich, Germany and now living in Cork, Ireland, Eva is a freelance illustrator and concept artist. Her main focus is on detailed character art, in both traditional and digital media. Her work has been published in a variety of books, magazines and games for clients within various fields, including Wizards of the Coast.
eva-widermann.de

LAND SPIRIT
"A creature from Inuit mythology, drawn for one of the most fascinating projects I've worked on so far."

TUUTANNGUUIJUK
"A piece I did for the Inuit Mythology Project, set up by Inhabit Media, Canada, to preserve Inuit culture, legends and heroes."

ANGEL VS DREAMSEED
"It's surprising how much dirt this sketch contains. I just swept together everything that was surrounding me, including eraser fluff, cigarette ash, dust, coffee, graphite powder and cat hair."

TEAR COLLECTOR
"A monster concept I did for the role-playing game Engel."

"I love drawing organic shapes and spirals and quirky stuff"

MAHAHA
"A famous evil creature from the Arctic legends."

SOME SORT OF ORKO
"I love drawing organic shapes and spirals and quirky stuff. This one reminded me a bit of Orko in the end! Orko was cool!"

FISH MONSTER

"We have an artsy crowd in Cork called Drink & Draw, and this is something I produced at such a get together. I enjoy it a lot – it's one of the rare times I get a chance to draw something for myself."

NULJAJUK

"Portrait of an Inuit goddess."

QUALLUIPILLUK

"Also done for the Inuit Mythology Project. Perhaps it's an Arctic version of a Morlock?"

DEGENESIS

"Working for the RPG Degenesis taught me to be messier and dirtier with my sketches, which I've maintained ever since."

"Working for the RPG Degenesis taught me to be messier and dirtier with my sketches"

KANGIQSUARMIUQPAK
"An inuit giant."
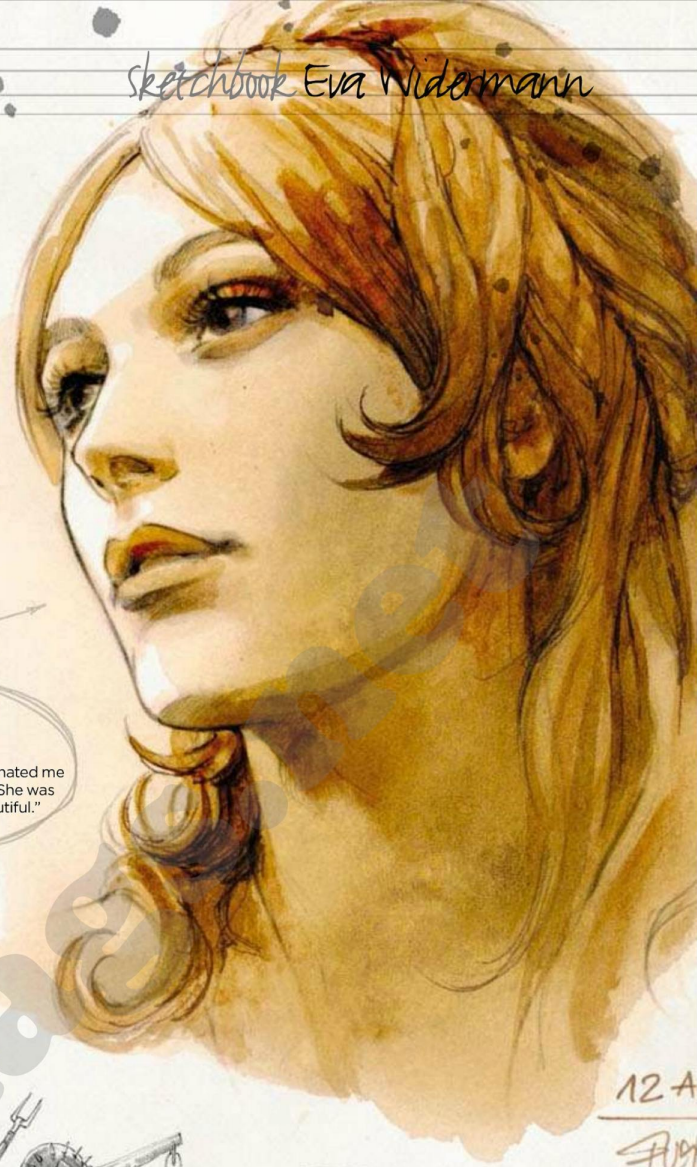
SHARON TATE
"The 60s actress fascinated me since my childhood. She was just incredibly beautiful."

"Drink & Draw is one of the rare times I get a chance to draw for myself"

12 A

NIGHTMARE BUNNY
"One of the topics of a Drink & Draw night."
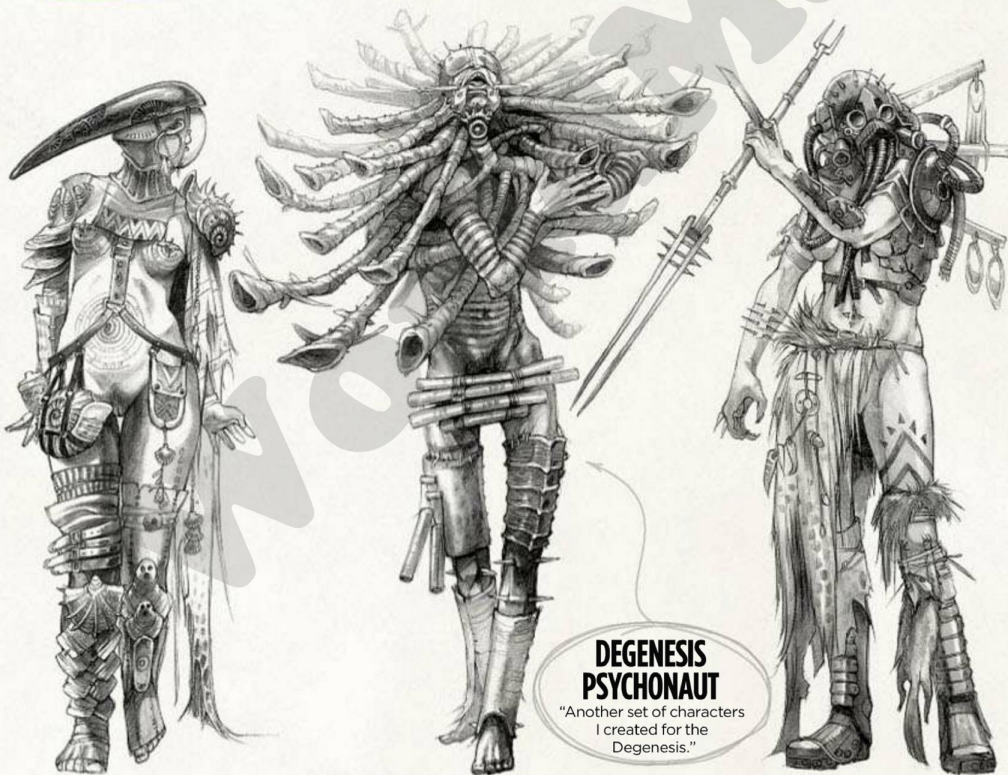
DEGENESIS PSYCHONAUT
"Another set of characters I created for the Degenesis."

NIGHTMARE BUNNY

Development sheet

PROJECT TITLE: FIREWALKER

Setting out to design a military vehicle that would participate in conflicts 50 years into the future, **Alex Karanak** wanted a hi-tech and aggressive yet realistic concept. This stunning spider tank is the result...

Artist PROFILE

Alex Karanak

A professional video games concept artist and illustrator from the Russian city of Irkutsk, Alex mixes realism with manga influenced designs. He's worked on projects that include casual gaming for social networks, through to real-time strategy, MMO and first-person shooters, including Killzone 3.
karanak.daportfolio.com

Brainstorming I begin this project by thinking about the main pieces of equipment for the tank. Different sensors, tools and defence components... essentially, everything that's on a normal tank. All this brainstorming results in a vehicle that has a double-barrelled gun on a walking chassis, with a crew of two. Next I start on the turret and gun. I use the silhouette technique to create several versions of the tower. Although I want to make a double-barrelled machine from the outset, I create a couple of options to ensure my instincts are correct. The fourth option is perfect and combines the conventional tank gun barrel with the workings of a rail gun.

VEHICLE CONCEPTING
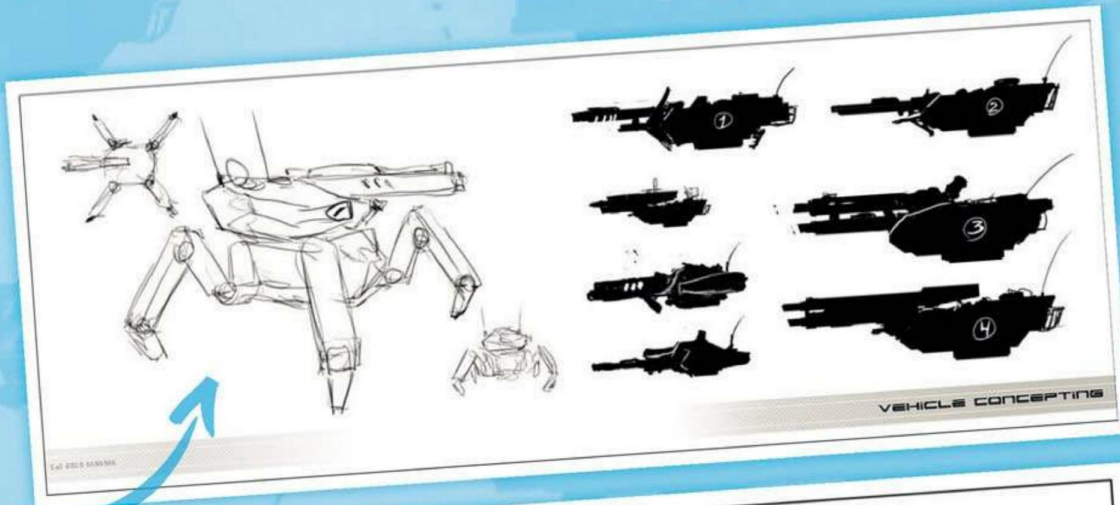
Visualisation I begin drawing the tank in a perspective view, to show it in its entirety. Then I construct the vehicle, visualising a common form and direction as I go. I gradually build up the tank, from the feet up to the turret. I decide that the tank will be lit from above, and create harsh shadows on the tank – not gradients – since these will be used later to create contrast. On a new layer set to Hard Light I define the tank's volumes and tones, and add glare and reflections on the metal where appropriate.

WUT?

VEHICLE CONCEPTING
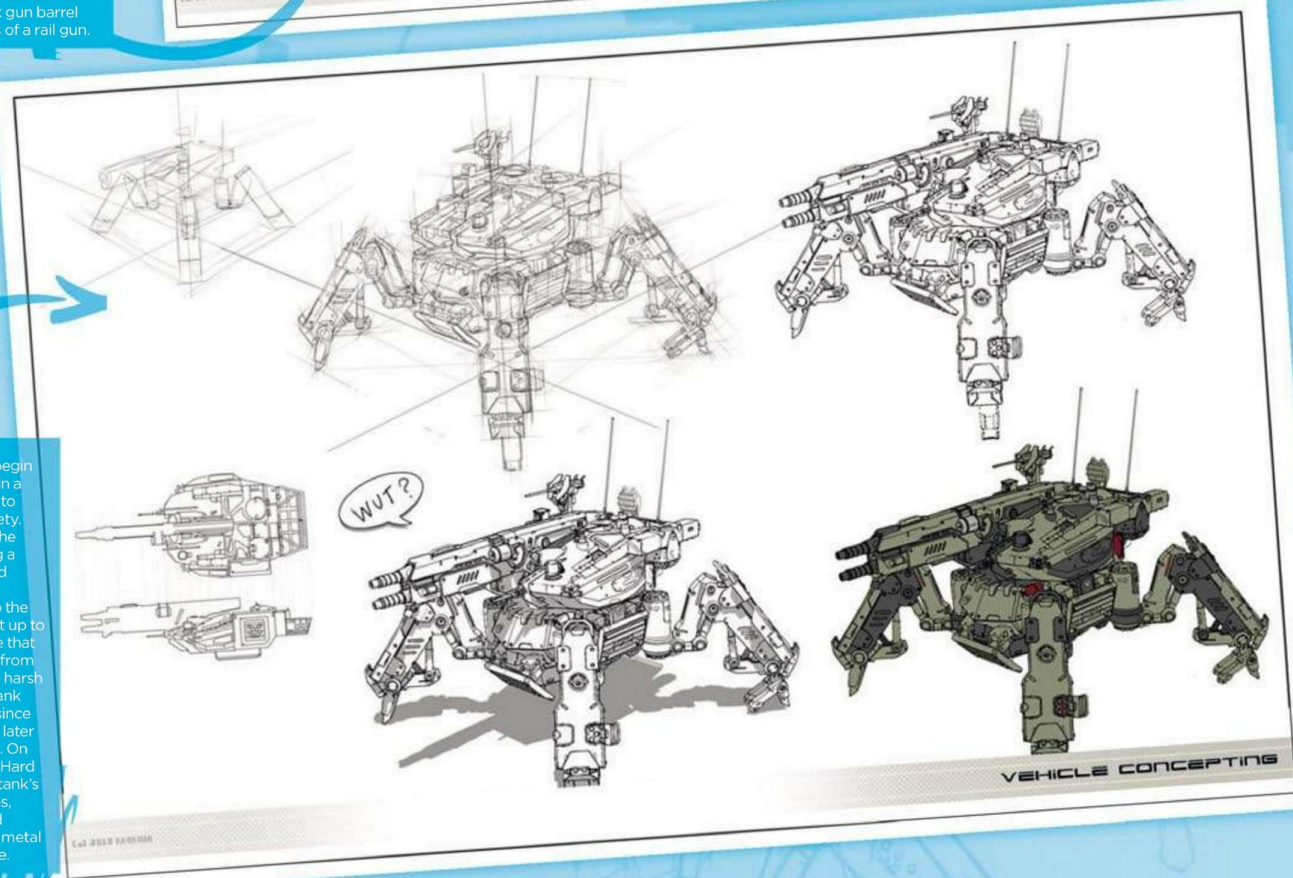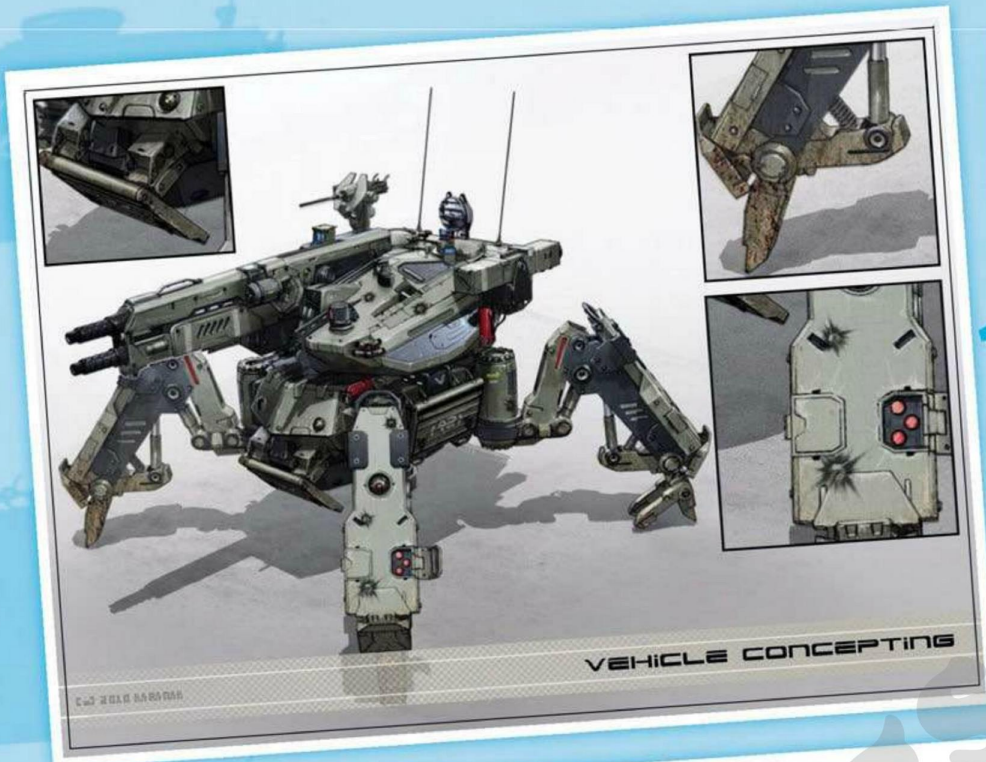
Adding texture I use the same basic texture and overlay it onto my tank using different blending modes with a little transparency – firstly Colour Dodge and then Overlay. I dab areas of the paintwork with a dotted brush to give the effect of scratches and use a sand texture around the bottom of the legs and lower body to give the effect of a worn and seasoned battle tank.

Body details I study examples of military and civilian equipment to gain a clear idea about the technical side of my design. In addition to the geometric and technical details there are also 'observational' details, such as the number and markings – that help give my machine an air of realism. Finally, I place my tank next to a soldier to show the scale of the design.
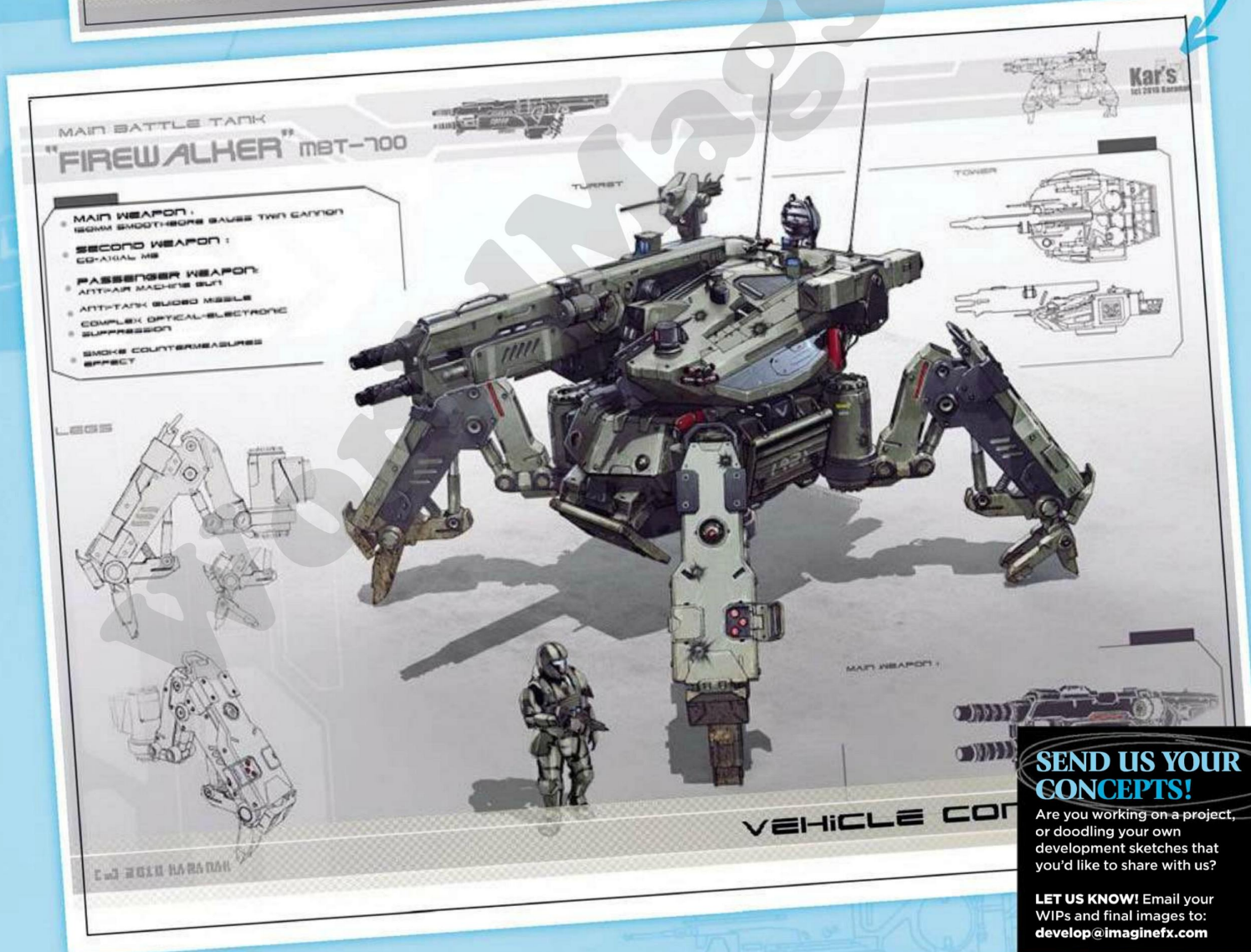
SEND US YOUR CONCEPTS!

Are you working on a project, or doodling your own development sketches that you'd like to share with us?

LET US KNOW! Email your WIPs and final images to: develop@imaginefx.com

THE MECHANICS OF INSPIRATIONAL DESIGN

From design legends to concept art masters, we've cherry-picked vehicle art to engage your creative gears!

SYD MEAD

HYPERVAN ON CRIMSON PLAZA
"Vehicles are a stylistic invention in any time coordinate scenario," says Syd, identifying the importance of vehicle design to our understanding of history, place and time.

VILLAGE MACHINE
Syd's vision of future holiday travel from his 2003 one-man show. A Boeing six-star flying space resort launches galactic travellers into space to explore new worlds.

"I admire Sir Ridley Scott. His visual expertise is dramatically flawless," says visual futurist and legendary vehicle designer Syd Mead. "I would work with him in an instant."

The enigmatic artist hasn't officially been approached to join Scott on his proposed return to the Blade Runner universe, but Syd's mind is already whirring over the possibilities. Will a sequel spin-off from the original's "make-do world with high-tech overlay, a sort of retro-future" or as a prequel "with the design and scenic characteristics consistent with the Blade Runner world's technology profile in progress towards its own future."

As well as working on Blade Runner, Syd made his name on all manner of sci-fi movies, from TRON to Star Trek: The Motion Picture and Aliens. Revered for his insight and eye for a sleek line, he also understands the constraints of filmmaking. Here's what happened when James Cameron turned down Syd's original

ARTIST INSIGHT
Technology is advancing at such a pace that design for futuristic movie or TV productions competes, in the popular memory, with actual stuff you can buy

design for the Sulaco spacecraft from Aliens, containing the space marine squad.

"Cameron had FedExed the script to me. I came up with a spherical design with lots of antennae projecting out the front of this armoured ball shape," says Syd. "Cameron liked it, but cautioned that he wanted a fly-by of the ship past the lens, meaning that he didn't want to pull focus on the fly-by. Following his directions, the Sulaco became a flatter, in-section final design."

With Syd every word is thoughtfully phrased and presented. He's precise. There's no waste. Like his art, where every stroke is important. "I don't think I'm obsessive, but I do indeed fret over every line in car design," says the artist.

sydmead.com

THE MECHANICS OF INSPIRATIONAL DESIGN

VF-1S STRIKE VALKYRIE
"Since I had an interest in them to begin with, I didn't need to do any particular sort of training," says Tenjin of his move into painting mechs.

TENJIN HIDETAKA

ARTIST INSIGHT

> These mechs were just things that I really liked, so I just naturally started to draw them and became an artist

One of the defining vehicle creations in sci-fi has been the Valkyrie, designed by Shoji Kawamori for the manga and anime Macross. It's the design that took modern fighter jets and turned them into mechs. Without the Valkyrie defending Earth's iconic SDF-1 starship, there'd be no Transformers.

These days illustrator Tenjin Hidetaka has been a guiding hand with the Valkyrie design. His work on Macross and GUNDAM, books, models and video games has made Tenjin a leading figure in Japanese illustration.

"I think it's because of the shape of the Valkyrie," states Tenjin when asked why the design is still so popular. "Even as an actual physical model or toy, it has no unnecessary parts and transforms flawlessly from plane to humanoid robot. As a plane, its design is supposed to look as much like a real-life design as possible and, as such, preserves the sleek beauty of an actual fighter jet."

NUTS & BOLTS

Mechs are here to stay

"The Valkyrie doesn't make any compromises in its design and can change completely from one form to another," says Tenjin, explaining the everlasting appeal of the iconic mech design that has been made famous by the Macross, GUNDAM and Robotech series, and inspired the Transformers creators.

Tenjin says he's had no training to paint mechs and Macross machines. He did, however, graduate from Shibaura Institute of Technology's Department of System Engineering, majoring in mechanical control systems. This suggests that good vehicle design is grounded in reality.

"Unlike other science fiction, the art that mech design holds within gives it the unique aspect of being the creation of something that could very likely become reality someday," says Tenjin, explaining the continued fascination with humanoid vehicles. "As vehicles, I think mechs are often drawn in a way that emphasises their power to appeal to male fans, whereas these same vehicles also include an element of fashion that appeals to many female fans."

studio-tenjin.com

TIDE POOL
This is a work-in-progress painting for Scott's next book, BLAST. It incorporates his personal tide pool photo with a vehicle design.

SCOTT ROBERTSON

Founder of Design Studio Press, Scott's career spans movies, books and lecturing. A partnership with fellow designer Neville Page and big-name clients including BMW, Fiat and Universal Studios only serve to rubber-stamp Scott's credentials.

"If it's original and something the world has never seen before, I like it!", says Scott, revealing his love of designing all manner of vehicles, from bikes, cars and trucks in his book Drive, to spacecraft in the forthcoming Thrust.

Scott approaches his designs in the same way, whether for films or for real car design, by posing questions. What's the vehicle's use? How does it move? Where is the power source? Each question informs the design. From here Scott works from sketches and photos, then in Photoshop he develops his designs. Tide Pool is a WIP piece for Blast, Scott wanted to incorporate a photo taken in Mendocino, California with his quick pen sketch. "Working the two together meant I would have to take the rendering of the ship from quick thumbnail sketch to a photo-real level," says Scott of his process.

Scott is back working with Neville Page on a number of films, which he finds challenging because it "requires a different set of styling skills and methods than those practised in the automotive world," he says.

drawthrough.com ➤➤

I enjoy any process that helps me create fresh, new designs and renderings

SUNSET
"A warm, low sun lighting up the front of the ship made the sculpting of the forms a bit tricky," says Scott of this work-in-progress image.

NUTS & BOLTS

Old is new
"Having a good working knowledge of classic car design will make your imaginary vehicles more believable," says Scott. "All the basic styling topics such as silhouette, proportion, stance, character lines and transitional forms carry over, in addition to the engineering and packaging of the vehicle."

THE MECHANICS OF INSPIRATIONAL DESIGN

BONEYARD
"Making my ships functional is probably the most important consideration in my paintings," says Ian, stressing the need to make the unreal feel real.

IAN McQUE

❝ **By staying open to happy accidents and trusting my instincts, I'm confident a living, breathing universe will reveal itself as I chip away!** ❞

Unlike some of the artists that we feature here, Ian McQue's vehicles and ships exist within a world of his own making. This ensures that he can take a looser approach to his design process.

"I'll rarely plan how the final image should look before I start out," reveals the artist. "I have a rough idea of what I want, but I find that if I'm flexible in how I respond to how a painting's progressing I'll end up with a far better and less-contrived image than I would have made by sticking to a rigid initial design."

Ian follows the main principles of composition, form and colour, but even here he admits to often breaking with established conventions. "By doing so," says Ian, "you sometimes end up with a far more satisfying design than if you play safe."

Ian doesn't lose sight of the rules of vehicle design, however, stressing the need to ensure that his craft feel functional. His flotilla of junk ships – sky-bound, floating craft salvaged from defunct parts – could be a hard sell in other hands. "I'm trying to convey quite an outlandish notion to the viewer, so making those vehicles looked 'lived-in', as if they have a history, is vital to make this world believable," says Ian.

Ian is continuing to develop his unique craft and the world they inhabit. His ship designs are so expressive that a model kit series is in the works and there's potential for a movie and a video game. Ian is in the enviable position as a designer, to be creating a story around his vehicle designs and not vice versa.

mcqueconcept.blogspot.com

NUTS & BOLTS

On the move
"I find painting apps on the iPad a brilliant way to develop ideas rapidly," says Ian. Using the iPad Brushes app and its Viewer feature to sketch with and to play back the history of a painting, Ian can "see a point in the playback where I've made a particular decision and this has inspired a whole new piece".

CHRIS FOSS

"People like me are the filters," ponders legendary artist Chris Foss. "We take in everything around us and out the other end come these images."

The images he refers to are a lifetime's work of some of sci-fi's most memorable space ships and alien landscapes. A master at conjuring new shapes and forms floating in space, hulks of metal in gaseous voids tethered to distant asteroids, Chris's visions of futuristic vehicles are one of a kind and have influenced a generation of artists.

Chris studied architecture at Cambridge, but by the end of his first year he was illustrating for the new Penthouse magazine. He moved to London and began taking work for sci-fi book covers, everyone from

ARTIST INSIGHT

👀 I worked on Dune with the artist Mobius. We had this quite emotional conversation about the time. Both our memories are different 👀

NUTS & BOLTS

On the move

"Everyone has a book now – your life is bound between covers," says Chris about his recent book Hardware: The Definitive SF Works of Chris Foss, which is a collection of his back catalogue of classic sci-fi paintings, covers and concept artworks. "You can go off and meet your maker clutching your book and saying: 'Look I did this!'"

Philip K Dick to Isaac Asimov, as well as landing the job illustrating the Joy of Sex.

"For me a giant spaceship would have topless female stokers shovelling in nuclear nuts," recalls Chris in good humour. "Whereas for other people it was the Z Drive."

After spending a few years out of the sci-fi scene working on a series of hyper-realistic portraits, Chris has been enticed back to the genre in recent years. His catalogue of film work, which includes space ship designs for Alien and the famously cancelled Alejandro Jodorowsky version of Dune, caught the eye of recent filmmakers – work with the late Stanley Kubrick ushered in a second wave of sci-fi paintings. Chris now even gets asked to repaint his classic space ship vistas. "It feels like art forgery," says the artist, "I'm repainting old works trying to match paints that no longer exist".

chrisfossart.com ➤➤
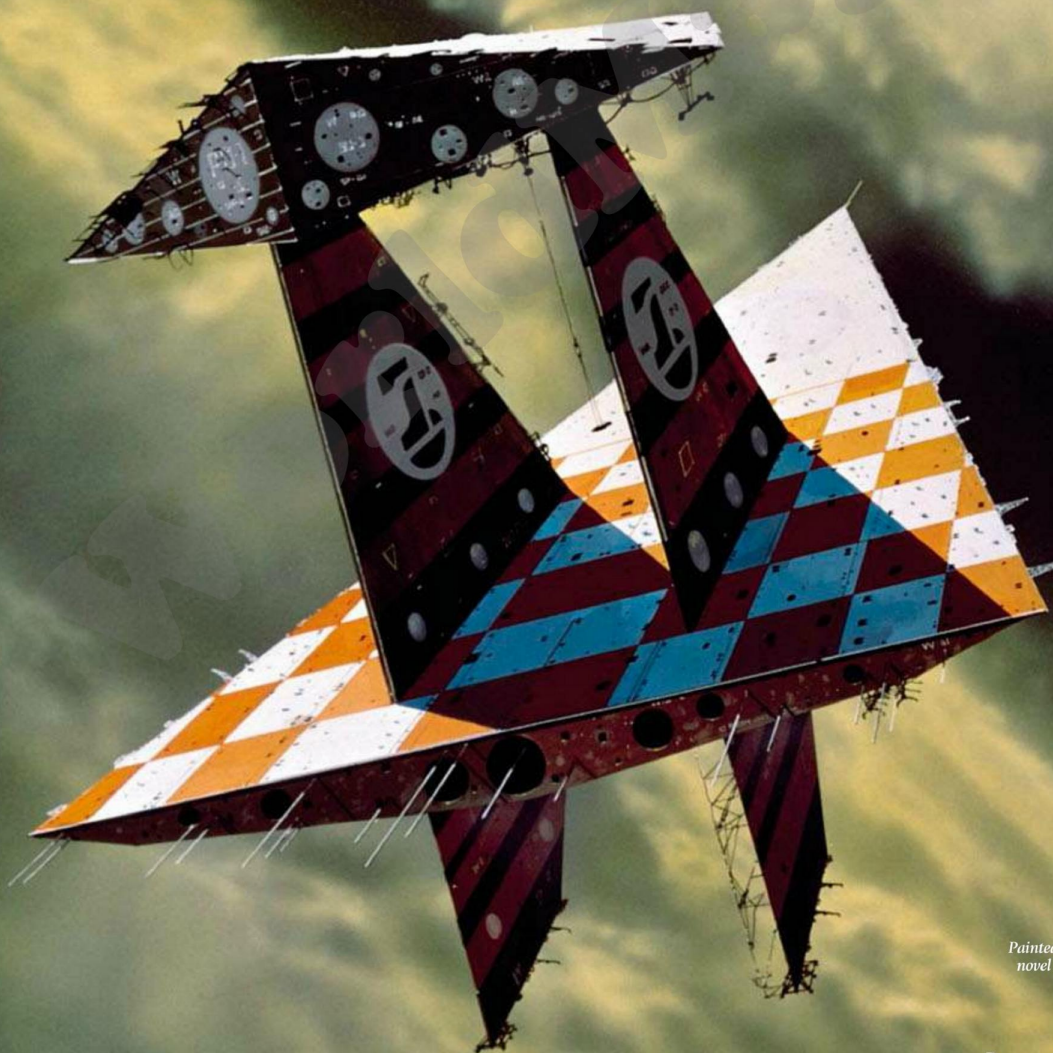
THE BLOODSTAR CONSPIRACY

Painted in 1978, this cover for the E.E. 'Doc' Smith novel is typical of Chris's work in the 70s. He now gets asked to repaint his classic ship scenes.

THE MECHANICS OF INSPIRATIONAL DESIGN

RYAN CHURCH

"It's kind of like an actor thinking about their character's backstory," says Ryan Church about his approach to vehicle design. He explains that questioning the functional details can define a design. "Too often this type of thinking is disregarded and the emphasis is placed on just 'making it look cool'."

Ryan describes himself as a frustrated engineer as much as an artist. "I happen to

"The final Enterprise design preserves most of the important elements of the original, but with a new take on the proportions, surface development and implied technology," explains Ryan.

ARTIST INSIGHT

♕ The challenge is to make the vehicle look functional and technical, and express the ideals and beliefs of the culture and characters using it ♕

love the research and reality part of the job," he says. "Even if the culture is completely alien, I like to think about the realistic, physical constraints that a far-advanced alien engineer would face."

Ryan is no stranger to creating real and unreal spacecraft, which he describes as extensions of the "ego and ideals of the individual" that's flying it. This was put to test when Ryan was hired to redesign the USS Enterprise for JJ Abrams Star Trek reboot. Ryan did a number of designs, his favourite being a "very light redesign that

kept all of the shapes of the original, but updated the materials and graphic breakdown of the forms". In the end a simpler design was chosen. "I kept all the elements but changed the proportions and

focused on streamlining and beautifying the shapes," says Ryan.

If Ryan could put his finger on a secret formula to good design, it's to throw yourself into the job: study biology, architecture, aviation and more. "I try to intuitively and naively apply that body of knowledge to shapes, gestures and colours that viscerally affect me," says the artist. "It's my ability to draw, model and illustrate that enables me to fuse those two things together and depict a new design."

ryanchurch.com

NUTS & BOLTS

Story is king

"The single most important rule is that it fits the story," says Ryan, adding that the designer needs to be aware of how the ship will be revealed, who it belongs to and where it fits in the story – what it represents. "The design must convey all of that very quickly and powerfully so that it reinforces the story."

FANTASY & SCI-FI DIGITAL ART

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Advice from the world's best artists

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This issue:

78 **90** **98**

Photoshop
PAINT A FLEET OF RETRO STARSHIPS

Use colour, scale and movement to create a compelling space-bound illustration. **Mike McCain** prepares to make the jump to hyperspace...

Space scenes can be a blast to illustrate. The setting presents a wide range of composition and colour options to play with, and there's no shortage of inspiration to be found. Of course, the same rules apply to a space scene that apply to any other illustration: I want to produce a dynamic composition with strong values and colours, interesting designs, convincing perspective and a

nice sense of action. In this workshop, I'll try my best to deliver all of these elements into an exciting, space-themed cover.

The word "design" can be used in different ways. Most of the design in this piece is the design of the illustration itself – making the space within the frame visually pleasing and understandable to the eyes. The other kind of design focuses on the form of a thing or place, designing the features of the spaceship to be

interesting and aesthetic. Sometimes these should be isolated tasks, so if I were designing this ship for a video game for example, I'd want to focus on that task without worrying about how it fits into a particular illustration. In other cases, such as this one, I have the freedom to design elements to best fit the image. I can choose to change the shape of the ship's "mouth", for example, to make for a stronger composition.

Artist PROFILE

Mike McCain
COUNTRY: US

Mike caught the art bug in college, somehow escaping with a degree while spending most of his time gaming or buried in Photoshop. He works for a new small Seattle game studio, Harebrained Schemes, and spends too much money on art books.
mikebot.net

1 Produce thumbnails
I come up with a few ideas to run past Paul, the ImagineFX art editor. These thumbnails are rough, but communicate some different composition options. The idea we're most excited about is a giant mothership design, inspired by the shape of a deep-sea angler fish. Without being too obvious about it, I think it'd be fun if it seems like the ship is swallowing up smaller ships in its path.

2 A new angle
The original camera angle I chose for this piece would do a fine job of showing off the ship design, but it's pretty static. So I try a new angle: bringing the camera down below the ship creates a much more dramatic scene and makes the ship itself more imposing. I also start rethinking colours – I'd like space to feel very vibrant in this piece.

3 Laying the groundwork for perspective
Perspective is going to be important to the mood of this piece, so I want to have a proper grid in place. It doesn't matter how you do it, so long as you put together some sort of perspective guide you can refer to. I set up lines converging at the central vanishing point, and then perspective-transform a grid texture into place to indicate the other two vanishing points, which are off-screen. I like to set one to Screen mode and one to Multiply, so that the different axes are easier to tell apart.

4 Ship design

Time to get more specific with this ship design. I don't want it to look overly fish-like, so I try to bring a more squared, orderly sensibility to the main shapes of the hull. I decide that the mouth should be a more uniform shape, rather than sloping closed towards the back, to help reinforce the perspective of the scene. I also add a quick decal on the side of the ship – I'd like to establish a funky geometric aesthetic for the ship's markings. As part of the cover design process, one suggestion from the ImagineFX team is to integrate the decal design with the cover typography. It's an neat idea, but it's later dropped for the sake of editorial clarity on the newsstand.

Shortcuts
Hue & Saturation
Ctrl+U (PC)
Cmd+U (Mac)
Test a colour addition on a new layer, then use Hue & Saturation to try a range of options.

5 Building up the light design

I'm trying to get a better sense of the areas of light and dark on the ship. I haven't decided how harsh I want the lighting to be, although gas from the nebula could create a more diffuse lighting situation. I do know I want the main light source to be above and to the left of the ship, with a strong red rim light coming in from the right. I bring in more small lights on the ship, to help sell the scale of the piece.

6 Background development

The nebula needs some more clearly defined shapes and darker areas. I try to design these so that they help lead the eye towards our focal point, the "mouth" of the ship, without looking contrived. For planets I use the circular Selection tool, which is the quickest way to paint within a perfect circle. I add a few larger stars by hand and make careful use of a texture to sprinkle a few more in the background.
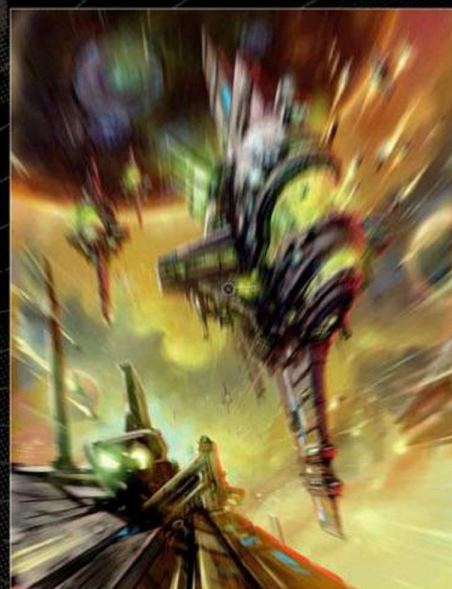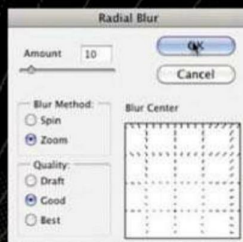
7 Too much detail

I've been too focused on the ship's design and perspective, and I continue to add ship details instead of looking more closely at the big picture. Rendering like this has its place, but I've committed the crime of going into detail-mode before nailing a strong value scheme. This is going to come back and bite me in a few steps' time, so be smart when you paint! Make sure you've fully thought through your issues of composition, value and colour before letting yourself render things out. At least I remember to flip the canvas horizontally from time to time, which enables me to spot either composition errors or things that just aren't working.

8 The bigger picture

I refine the mid-ground ships now, and add some more craft to heighten the action of the scene and reinforce the scale of these ships. The smaller ships also help to drive home the space theme; not all of the main ship may be visible on the magazine rack for potential readers to cotton on to the subject matter. Note that placing two clones of the big ship visible in the distance is not by chance. Repetition like this, with variation in scale, is an effective way to communicate depth in a scene. And three's always a good number.

9 Apply a Radial blur

Here's a quick trick that can add movement to a scene with an in-frame vanishing point such as this one. I copy the painting to a separate layer and apply a Radial Blur set to Zoom (Filter>Blur>Radial Blur), lining up the centre of the effect with my primary vanishing point. I sharpen the layer to achieve a more streaky look, then set it to Lighten mode and apply a layer mask to hide most of the effect, selectively painting some areas back in. Subtlety is key!

PRO SECRETS

Layer masks
Every now and then, layer masks come in handy. They enable you paint a mask in greyscale, determining which areas of a layer or layer group will be visible. Pure white is visible, pure black is hidden. Useful for selectively applying textures or certain effects, such as Blur or Sharpen. You can also create a layer mask from an existing selection, for example, the outline of a planet, by clicking (Layer>Layer Mask.

Shortcuts

Levels
Ctrl+L (PC)
Cmd+L (Mac)
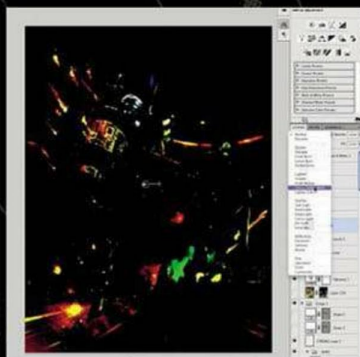Control white point, black point and gamma, and maximum brightness or darkness.

10 Bloom effects

You can quickly create a neat light bloom effect by copying your image to a new layer and then adjusting its levels. I drop everything to black except the very brightest points, slightly blur the layer and then set it to Linear Dodge. Now it's just a matter of tweaking the brightness and saturation of the new layer until I'm happy with the strength of the effect.

11 Act on feedback

I've been noodling on this image for too long and I've lost my eye for it. When you feel like you're painting in circles, get an outside opinion. I'm immediately told that the painting has become flat and lacks focus in value and palette. Checking the image in black and white makes this criticism easy to see. The main ship isn't much lighter or darker than the nebula behind it, causing it to blend in with the rest of the piece. Not the sort of thing I should have let slip, but it's not too late to fix it.

12 Value adjustments

I start the corrective process by punching up the bright areas of the ship while darkening the space behind it. To apply these large-scale value changes with the least amount of fuss and bother, I'm painting gradually with a Soft brush on a few Overlay layers above the rest of the piece. I want the top half of the ship to be lighter than the background, while the bottom half of the vessel needs to be darker than the background. This should enable the subject matter to pop effectively from its surroundings.

13 Colour adjustments

I've also managed to develop a messy, over-saturated palette. Adjustment layers come to the rescue here. I cool the background off and selectively brighten some blues through a combination of the Vibrance, Photo Filter and Selective Color adjustments. There's no wrong tool for the job when experimenting with colours like this – any of Photoshop's adjustment tools can help get you where you want to go.

14 Make the ship pop

I darken the background further, and brighten the ship with an Overlay layer. I'm using the Transparency mask of my original ship layer as the boundary so that the edges of the lighter colour I'm adding match with the edges of the ship. I also add some glow around the brightest areas of the ship, to help subdue some of the darks around the ship's "mouth".

Shortcuts

Transparency Layer Mask
Ctrl-click layer icon (PC)
Cmd-click layer icon (Mac)
This makes a selection based on the "filled" parts of a layer.

15 Final tweaks

Finally, the value scheme of the piece feels much stronger. But with all these late adjustments, some areas of the painting have become a little muddled. I go back in and redefine some edges and shapes where needed. I then apply a very slight sharpening effect to the image using the Unsharp Mask filter. And we're done… despite a few setbacks! Feel free to get in touch if you have any questions.

Photoshop
ILLUSTRATING THE SURREAL

Gain a unique insight into one artist's physical and mental process as Bradley Wright paints a surreal illustration that's full of story and energy

S itting at my desk at work, up to my elbows in a complex piece of concept art, I received the request from ImagineFX. Paint a twisted astronaut and document the process. This troubled me at first, as I don't have much in the way of a process. Sure, with my concept work I stick to a path that I've built up over the years. My personal paintings, however, are a completely different animal. I paint how I feel at the

given moment, and that changes vastly between paintings. My technique, process and rendering ability evolve with every painting. I was worried I couldn't help the good readers in any way.

So I'll explore my mental process of producing a painting. After all, if you're not in the right mind-frame, you're never going to unleash those deep-hidden paintings you've got locked away. This way, the technical process of painting

will find its own way – and this is what's so fun about painting, right? That ever-evolving process as your personality, mind and ability develop and mature.

I have, of course, got a style to my painting, which you will see take shape, but don't let this dictate your process and result. Instead, I hope that you'll find the reasoning and meaning behind the choices I make as more of an aid in creating your own art.

Artist PROFILE

Bradley Wright
COUNTRY: Sweden

Self-taught Bradley is a concept artist and illustrator at a leading games developer. He's also busy developing his creator-owned comic.
bradleywright. wordpress.com

1 Kicking things off
I start with some thumbnailing. When deciding to paint something from the heart, or something a little surreal and emotive, think of thumbnails as more of a tool for developing the story of an image. They're great for finding a composition and silhouette, but they let your mind start to work on the deeper messages you might want to communicate. Here, I had the initial idea to do my astronaut as a representation of Death – scythe and all. As I drew them, I fell out of love with that idea but the basic concept still held true. Instead, I started to imagine a sense of birth – the astronaut floating in the void reminded me of an unborn child in the womb. See, story stuff.

PRO SECRETS

There are no shortcuts
The sooner you come to terms with this, the better an artist you'll be and the quicker you'll improve. It takes hard work and commitment; you're not going to stumble across the trick to success. Go outside, draw from life, interact with like-minded people and absorb everything that you can.

2 Start painting
Starting loose with big brushes, I produce lots of nice marks and textures. I want random strokes but still with a purpose, because I'm using them to add movement and to strengthen the composition. I even drop in a past image of mine, blurring it a lot and playing with Overlay or Multiply.
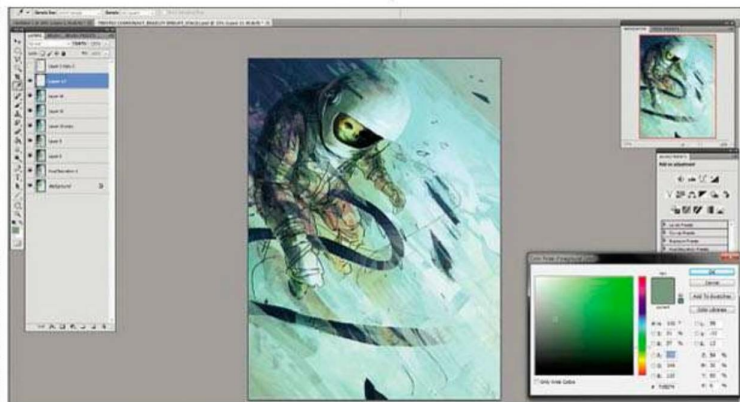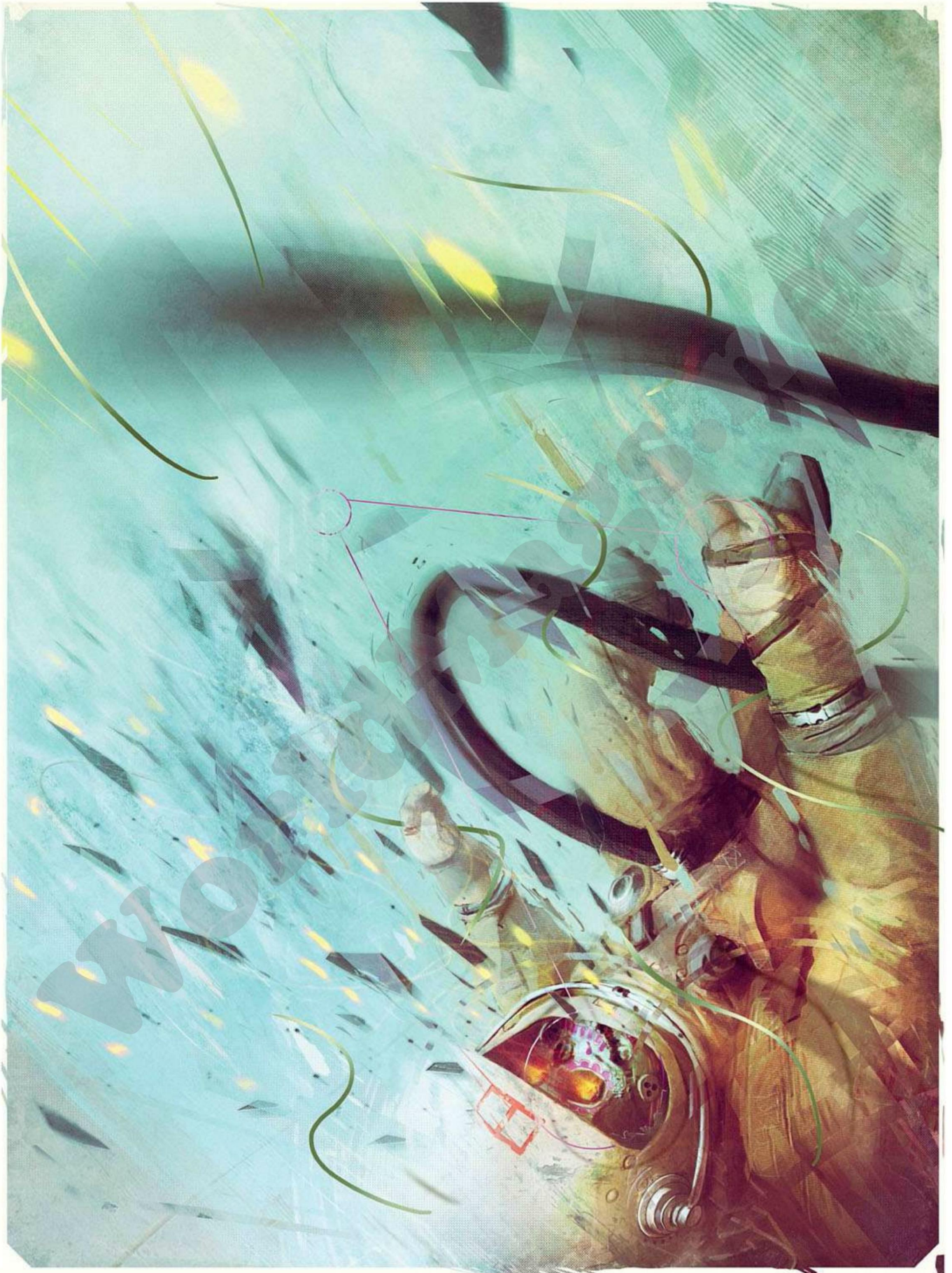
3 Defining shapes
This will give me a better idea of how the composition will develop. I block in large key areas like the helmet. I know I want this to be the focal point. Don't be afraid to keep a painting loose. Tightening up the rendering of specific areas will help the viewer's eyes travel across your image, enhancing the experience and the story that you're telling.

ON THE DVD

WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PHOTOSHOP

**CUSTOM BRUSH:
FLAT TIP_PENCIL**

This is my sketch brush –
the one I use to nail quick
ideas. It mimics pencil on
paper pretty well.

MYBROOSH

After I'm done with my
thumbnails and I need
to start on the under-
drawing, I use this brush.

OIL PASTEL LARGE 3

This brush is great for
blending while still
enabling you to get hard,
sharp edges.

MAGIK

In the initial paint phase,
I use this brush to give
me lots of texture, nice,
fluid shapes and marks.

SAMPLE BRUSH #2 1

Ideal for areas where I
want sharp flicks of paint.
It can give you a great,
sharp, ink-like mark.

Control your chaos

4 Previously I mentioned keeping loose and creating texture. Well, now that I'm seeing how the image is developing, I can start to control that looseness. This is a tricky stage, because I don't want to kill the image and make it stiff. I try to balance the looseness I achieved earlier, but at the same time keep the image readable. At this stage I'm also focusing on the lighting. This is a surreal painting so I'm not going to hinder my progress by being too strict with myself about it looking totally real. Yet I do need a touch of realism, so people will buy into the image. The lighting will help this.

Correcting mistakes

5 I don't like the skull that I've painted: it's unreferenced and rushed. I have a skull on my desk so I do a quick study of it and drop it into the painting. Little touches of realism in your abstract paintings work. Contrast is everything. In addition, don't spend 10 hours painting a photo texture – work a texture in. Just don't rely on photos – if you do that, you won't grow as an artist. I use some basic textures for scuffs and dirty marks on the helmet and the fabric of the suit.

Start embellishing

6 I have the basics of a solid image now. I'm happy with the composition, so now it's time to make it bling. I add some shards of flying glass from his visor and fiery embers. This adds movement to the image and, most importantly, it adds to the story. I'm really starting to get a feel for the character of the image. Questions arise as to why this guy is in this situation. Remember: the more you can get people curious about your image, the longer they will want to look at it.

Keep on defining

7 I'm defining the image more and more at this stage: subtle tweaks to the colour, lighting and to the various effects. I use a Screen layer and circular Gradient Fill a fair bit here. It's good for softening parts of the image that pop a little too much. Always remember your focal point. Because this is the head area, I want all the detail and all the movement to shoot your eye right here.
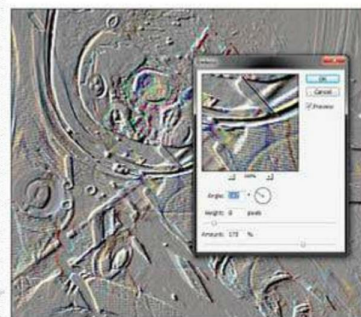
Filters are good

8 Honest, they are. Blurs are the filters I use daily, but a few of the garish ones can be put to good use occasionally. There has been a stigma about using filters in 'serious' Photoshop art, but it all depends on how you use them. The Emboss filter is fun to use. When you emboss your image, set it to Overlay and play with the opacity. It gives a relief texture quite similar to traditional oils.

Upside down

9 If you remember back to the thumbnails, I wanted the astronaut at the bottom, upside-down. It's now time to flip him. I can adjust stuff now that pops out as wrong. Sometimes things look good one way, but scream out wrong another. The reason for this composition is that I like to push the norm and challenge the eye a little. It adds to the story: you get the sense of him falling or tumbling through space. It's not a comfortable composition – it's literally on the edge – so hopefully the viewer will feel this awkwardness.

10 Adjustment layers

I love these things. Of course, it's ideal to nail every colour choice and level the first time you lay down paint, but I suck. Adjustments save me. Using the Curves Adjustment layer and tweaking the RGBs can strengthen your colour choices and help unify the image. I boost the astronaut's colours while pushing back the background colours. Always keep in mind the basics: what colours complement each other and what value choices help to push areas or pull back others.

11 Personal style

This is something I like to do, knowing a lot of people think I ruin the image. Stick to your convictions! I flatten the image and use one of my favourite tools, the Lasso tool, to select random shapes. I push the shapes around the image, taking care not to obscure the meaning of the focal point. This adds movement and something a little different. You need to find your own style: you'll get nowhere mimicking others. When you find something that works, it'll fill your artistic soul.

12 Digital effect

I use the Lasso tricks for more reasons than just because I like it. I feel that my painting has a pretty good traditional feel to it, both in terms of the aesthetic, but also in the way I apply layers of paint and blend colour. The tricks and distortion add a nice contrast to the fluidity of the paintings. Remember what I said earlier: contrast is key.

13 Graphic design

For the same reasons as earlier, I like the contrast of graphic shapes in a painting, so I throw a few of these in over the image. They're carefully thrown, of course! I use them to strengthen the composition and the path your eye will travel around the image. Graphic design is cool. This is an ever-so-slight sci-fi image, so it works here, but it might not all the time.

14 Borders are classy

I love to add frames to images; not just a simple border but nice oval frames, or odd-shaped frames. I kept it simple here for the purpose of printing in this issue. I make the border a tad more interesting and incorporate it into the image by erasing some of the border. Don't always just stick a simple black frame around the work that you've spent hours on. Instead, think about whether it could benefit from the addition of that little extra something.

15 Wrapping up

I'm pretty much done with the image, but I decide it needs a slight colour tweak, so I go back to my Adjustment layers and play with the Curves and Selective Color options. I have a texture that I made from pouring coffee onto watercolour paper, so I use this set to Multiply – it gives the image a slightly aged look. As a final tweak, I think the focal area could use a little more richness, so I use the Gradient Fill tool and set it to Overlay, just to pop it out a bit more.
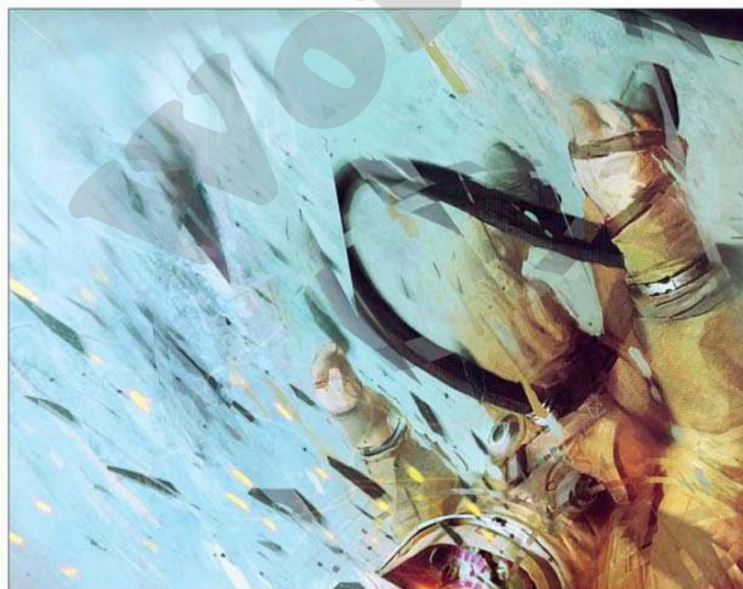
PRO SECRETS

Make use of the Navigation palette

We all know that if you flip an image, it enables you to see it with new eyes. The same goes for this Photoshop feature. You can glance at your image constantly in a thumbnail view. If it works as a thumbnail and reads clearly, it's going to work in any size.

Photoshop
BE CREATIVE IN YOUR WARM-UPS

Autumn Rain Turkel reveals the secrets – and the benefits – of professional warm-up exercises in this quick-sketching masterclass

This workshop will cover my process of preparing for a day of sketching, drawing and painting. I'll talk about warming up using online resources. I'll also go over sketching thumbnail ideas and translate them into a longer quick sketch for improvement and fun.

I usually start things off with my morning warm-up. This consists of gesture drawings and quick sketching.

The first step is to have a file dedicated to this. Usually I have one file a month and every day is contained in a layer. I set the file to 300dpi and roughly 8x11 inches. This enables me to have one figure on the screen at full pixel size for each gesture drawing (see step 1).

The line quality isn't important to me for the purposes of gesture drawings, so a simple hard-edge round brush set to around 4px is fine for these. I start the process with 60-second gestures using either a timer and a library of images locally, or a web resource such as **pixelovely.com/gesture/index.php** or **posemaniacs.com**.

If you know someone who'll pose for you, it's always better to draw from life. Using a flat image to draw from can hamper the artist, because the image is flattened and a lot of the decisions have been made for you by the camera.

1 Gesture drawings
I will try to get about 16 to 20 gestures done. The focus is really just moving my hand, seeing the large shapes and forms and trying to get ready for some real art. Start with the action line, then try to develop the relationships of the major masses of the head, ribcage and pelvis. I then need to make sure that I get between five and ten hands and feet on the same page. This is just to gain and maintain a solid understanding of the mechanics of the body's extremities.
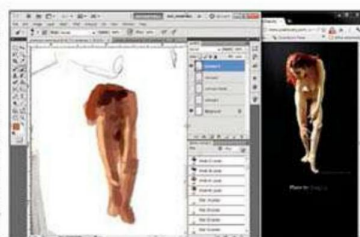
2 Colour-painted gestures
I move on to full-colour painted gestures. These are two-minute gestures and really are just preparing me to digitally paint. Again, they're not about making a pretty picture: instead, it's about seeing the overall shapes, colours and values, then making hard decisions quickly about how to best represent them on the canvas. Sometimes I produce two-minute gesture sketches of animals, just to mix things up a bit.
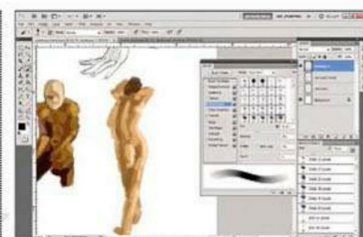
3 Aim to vary your brushes
During this phase of the warm-up process I'm using a decent range of brushes to produce my sketches. This serves to keep things interesting, as well as prevent me from becoming too comfortable with one brush setting or another. I use the dual brush settings all the time and play with the spacing and size sliders regularly to keep it new. Maintaining that freshness stops this quick exercise from becoming a daily chore.

4 Produce thumbnails

Once I've finished the warm-ups, it's on to the thumbnails phase, which is where the magic happens! I either dedicate an entire file to a bunch of thumbnails or I make a template that contains prearranged areas for drawing. This is all about exploration around themes. Set yourself up with something or find a theme online. Any of the major websites have challenges you can participate in. This is a great resource when you're in need of a jump-start.

5 Get down quick ideas

I don't spend more than 10 or 15 minutes on each drawing. Just enough to get some basic value structures and design in and give myself enough understanding of the image if I choose to flesh it out later. I use the Chisel brush, with a Dual brush applied to give it some depth, but because this is all about producing quick ideas, I sometimes play with the settings to make more interesting textural elements in each thumbnail.

PRO SECRETS

Make use of a safety net

If you're working for a commissioning editor, keep them happy – they're your best friend and will catch all the things you're too tired to spot or have overlooked.

6 The big choices

Once I've done six to nine thumbnails, I'll go over them and find whatever one appeals to me most. Or in this case, ImagineFX's editor, Claire, makes the call on the central dragon.

7 Full-sized image

For the next step I start a full-sized image. This would be whatever size the editor asks for or whatever you prefer. I generally use 16x9 because I enjoy the widescreen format. (In this case, the editor had specific size constraints.) I then enlarge it to fit the entire image and bring the opacity down so that it's just a reference. I then start the process of quickly redrawing the entire image.

8 The way forward

Usually I start on the background or sky and work my way forward towards the focal point. This allows me to 'dirty' the board with soft and textural Dual brush settings, and allows for more visual interest along the way, and maybe even some happy accidents. I place each element on its own layer, but you can do whatever works for you.

9 Include all the major elements

I make sure to get the values close to what I had in the thumbnail, but I don't stick to them completely. This is the path away from fun and interesting things that happen on the fly.
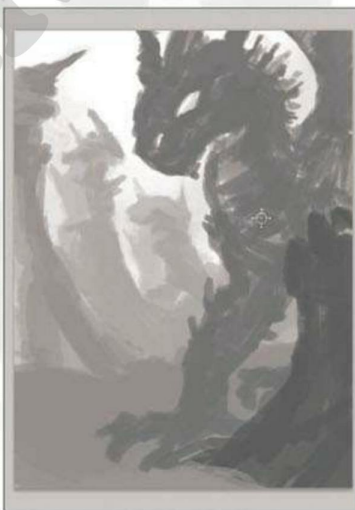
10 Begin tackling the detail work

Once everything is laid out on the canvas in a general value structure that's working relative to each other, I begin to work on some smaller details of the dragon and flesh out certain design ideas that came to me earlier.

11 Add further details

I work to take the entire image to a level of finish that's fairly equal, with a focus on the important details and elements. Some of the image will naturally be less detailed, to enable the eye of the viewer to rest. That is why I use the textural brushes – it makes it possible to introduce small details that are just visual noise. This ensures there's a less 'plastic' look to the image.

12 Adjust the lights

Once I have the values and elements all placed correctly, I start a new layer and add in the lighting. Usually I use a Soft Round brush and then adjust the layer's Opacity slider to achieve the look that I want. ➡➡

13 Add colour and adjustments

I add in some colour by adding a layer and setting the Blending mode to Color or Overlay and adjusting the Opacity and Fill sliders to achieve the look I want. I'll also use Adjustment layers like Color Balance, Hue Saturation and Levels for a particular layer. I then Ctrl+select the layer and the adjustment, and hit Ctrl+E to merge them.

14 Make full use of Photoshop's layers

I continue adding Photoshop adjustment layers to my drawing, using Overlay layers and a combination of additional layers of paint to get the dragon looking as finished as I want it to be. The end is almost in sight!

15 Finishing touches

I make an additional layer and add in a 'glaze' by filling it with a gradient and setting it to an Overlay mode. This generates some dramatic lighting effects.

16 Signing

The last step is to sign it and post it on the web for the world to see. Remember, quick sketching is a fun tool to build your skills and try out techniques you can use for finished illustrations. Have a good time and learn something new. See you at the drawing board.

Painter
ADD TEXTURES USING PAPERS

Apply convincing textures to your artwork using grainy brushes in conjunction with Painter 12's Paper functions, says **Simon Dominic**

CORE SKILLS

Painter 12 offers two main ways to add texture to your paintings above and beyond the paint 'flow' patterns that are inherent in some of the traditional media brushes on offer.

The quickest way to generate texture is to apply a filter to a completed image. For example, the Apply Surface Texture option, found in Effects>Surface Control, enables you to generate a variety of textures, which can be baked onto your canvas. You can also define multiple light sources and related attributes, such as reflection and exposure.

However, there are several drawbacks to this method. A more flexible and convincing alternative is to apply texture on a brushstroke-by-brushstroke basis, using Papers.

Artist PROFILE
Simon Dominic
COUNTRY: England

Simon is a self-taught freelance illustrator who specialises in fantasy, sci-fi and horror. He works primarily on game art, book cover, private commissions, cards and magazines
painterly.co.uk

1 Applying Paper textures

Choose a grain-enabled brush, such as Real Wet Bristle from Real Watercolor. Set Grain in General to 50 per cent. Display the Paper panel using Window>Paper Panels>Papers. Choose a paper and use the sliders to modify Scale, Contrast and Brightness. The white areas show where the pigment will be most concentrated and a good contrasting balance of white to black produces the best results.

2 Create your own Papers

Load your texture image and select an area using Rectangular Selection, or press Ctrl/Cmd+A to select everything. Ensure that your texture is on the canvas (not layered!) and that your Canvas is selected in the Layers panel. Click the menu icon top right of the Papers panel and choose Capture Paper. Name your paper and set the Crossfade value, higher equating to better tile blending. Save with OK.

3 Generate your own textures

You can either source your own texture images or use Painter 12 to generate a bespoke one. Display the Patterns panel using Window>Media Control Panels>Patterns. Click the menu top-right and select Make Fractal Pattern. Adjust the settings to suit, monitor the results in the preview window and choose OK to generate. Repeat step 2 to use this texture as a paper.

VIEW AND EDIT YOUR PAPERS

A. Libraries
Multiple libraries can be displayed, each with their paper preview swatches.

B. Paper Library View
Allows for Small, Medium and Large Paper swatches, plus a List option that displays the Paper names.

C. Paper Libraries
Toggle the display of your available libraries.

D. New Paper Library
By default it's populated with your current paper choice.

E. Import Paper Library
Import a .paperlibrary file and it'll appear in the Paper Libraries list.

F. Export Paper Library
Choose the library to export from the pull-down and save it as a .paperlibrary file.

G. Restore Default Paper Library
Return control to one of the default libraries.

H. Capture Paper
Create a Paper based on an existing image.

I. Make Paper
Create a Paper based on the procedural parameters Pattern, Spacing and Angle.

J. Show Paper Controls
Displays the panel for the current Paper.

K. Delete Paper
Removes a Paper from the library. You can hide a Paper by right-clicking>Hide Paper.

science vessel
LT47C310C89

Photoshop
CUSTOMISE YOUR BRUSHES

Here's a fast and effective technique for creating your own futuristic scenes in Photoshop, courtesy of **Liviu Tudoran**

The world of digital art enables you to create images that would give most people using traditional media pause for thought. I'm not saying that programs such as Photoshop are better then their analogue counterparts, but they're

certainly more accessible for a greater number of artists. Such artists make up for their shortfall in technical prowess with traditional tools with their enthusiasm and imagination. To them, the digital canvas is just friendlier compared to a blank piece of paper.

The goal of this workshop is to help you create your own sci-fi scene in an intuitive and creative way, through the use of custom brushes. Once you tap into their usefulness it'll open up your creativity and enable you to depict scenes from your imagination more easily. ➥

Artist PROFILE

Liviu Tudoran
COUNTRY: Italy

Liviu is a vehicle design student at IED Turin, with a passion for automotive design. He's experienced in interior/ product design and concept art, and is currently working as a vehicle designer at Stile Bertone. **tudoran. carbonmade.com**

DVD Assets
The files you need are on your DVD in the Liviu Tudoran folder in Workshops.

Workshops
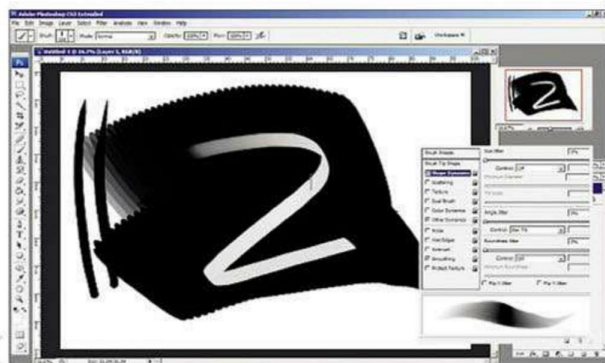
1 Adapt Photoshop's brushes

The idea behind using custom paint brushes is to achieve high-quality results quickly. All of my custom brushes are based on the basic set of brushes that Photoshop provides as defaults. The first custom brush is one of the most important ones. It'll help me to inject some sharp and precise designs into the drawing.
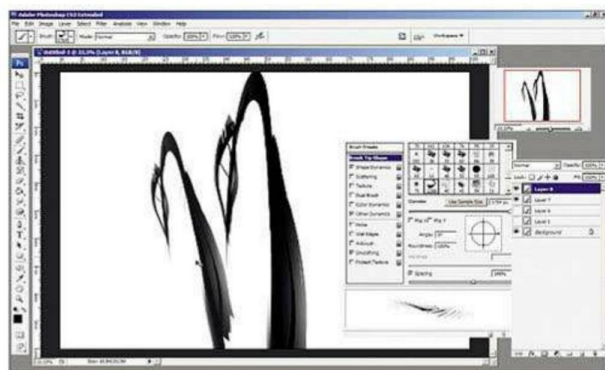
2 Introduce geometry

The second set of custom brushes will be used to create quick geometric shapes and to give my designs a sense of 3D. Once you understand how to create this kind of brush it'll be just a matter of minutes before you realise that you can build yourself dozens of them, helping you to speed up and improve your work.

3 Create brushes for detailing the vehicle

The last set of brushes will be used for detailing my vehicle, making it look like a complex and elaborate mode of transport. I've also created a quick 'disk' brush that'll enable me to paint a focal point on the sci-fi craft.
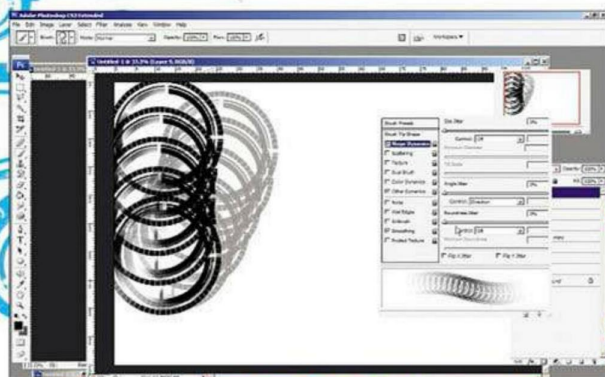
4 Set up the canvas with a neutral colour

It's time to set up the canvas. I usually start with a neutral colour, such as a medium grey. It could be a grey-black gradient or white grey. It's important just to keep the colours off the canvas for the moment.

5 Start on the forms of the vehicle

I start by roughing out some quick volumes using my custom brushes. Because it's more of a speed paint than a detailed piece of concept art, the result will probably be more artistic than a precise one. In my opinion it'll display a greater range of creativity in its forms and colours. I experiment with some quick black and white structural details just by laying the brushes here and there.
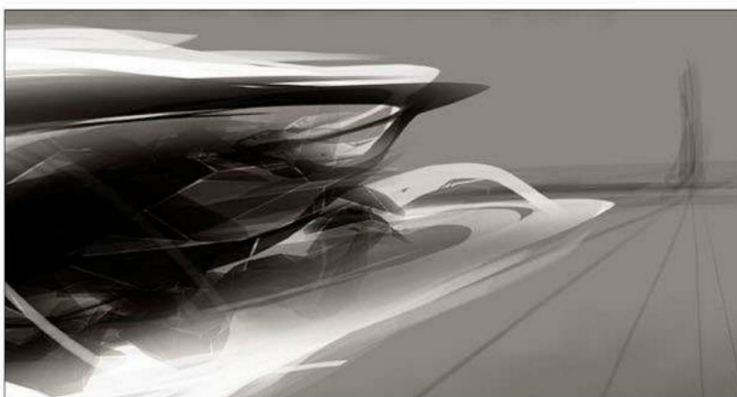
6 Add a building

I try to place the vehicle in context by painting a hint of a structure in the distance. It should make things easier for me later on. I'm drawing with black and white brushes to break out some volumes. This helps me see something that I like, enabling me to take the painting forward.

7 Greys

Once I'm happy with how the vehicle and building are progressing, I start to add gradients of grey between the black and white surfaces that I created earlier. I define a main light source and introduce some shadows, giving some depth to my object.

8 Keeping the painting simple

Details are everything in a painting, but this is not the time to add them. Instead, I stay focused on my main volumes and surfaces. In my experience, the simpler the base of the work, the easier it'll be to perfect the detail later.

9 Strengthen the image's perspective

Small things such as adding fog, clouds and buildings in your drawings help the viewer to understand the painting's perspective and give more depth to your work. No pun intended!

10 Add colour to the composition

This is a good time to introduce colour to the sci-fi scene. Even though the work isn't finished, I prefer to start adding colour now because, through the very nature of adding details, I'll choose colours from adjacent elements and these will help my work to look more realistic, in terms of colour bleeding and light bounce. I start adding the colour all over the work by creating and working on a new layer set to Overlay. I paint with a soft standard brush on a lower opacity – between 30 and 40%.

Shortcuts
Duplicate a layer
Ctrl+J (PC)
Cmd+J (Mac)
Select the area with the Marquee tool, press this key combo and then paste it.

11 Be conservative with your colours

Once you've selected a range of colours, the next step is to start blending them. Even though colours inject emotion into a painting when they're added, there are many cases when a black and white painting can look much better and more expressive than a coloured one. That's why I prefer to add colour afterwards – it gives me a chance to experiment more with the composition. It's easy to add a lot of colours, thinking that it'll make a painting look full of life, but in my opinion it takes a lot of time and an experienced eye to manage a range of colours in the same image and represent them in a realistic way. Furthermore, using fewer colours helps your work to look more atmospheric and sci-fi like.
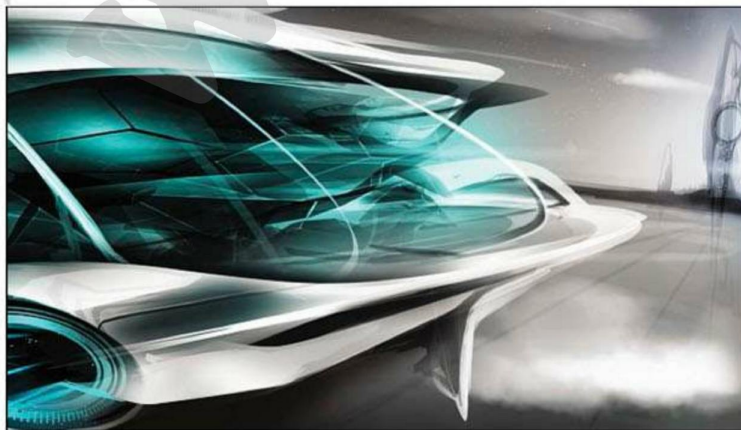
12 Detailing the background

Adding stars, clouds and random geometry with my custom brushes and blending the background colours is my attempt at trying to achieve soft transitions between the horizon line and the top and bottom of the image. This helps the viewer to easily understand what I'm trying to say with my art.

13 Enhance a focal point

I choose a focal point and add details to it, such as text. This will add even more depth to the image. At this point I could create new layers and paint onto them, before turning them on and off. This enables me to see if the additions are working or not. Overlay layers are great when you want some areas to look more shiny or coloured.

14 Finally, some filters

I experiment with a photo filter, which identifies a common range of colours for an image. I do this on a saved JPEG file, because it works only when you have one layer, and it also avoids permanently affecting the art with something that may not work in the first place. Don't forget the Sharpen and Blur tool. Add sharpness to the objects that are closer to you and some blur to the objects that are more distant. In this way you can simulate a depth of field effect.

Photoshop & Modo

CREATE A 3D BATTLE MECH

John Giang adds 3D methods to his design process to create a war-torn city with a mech in its midst…

Artist PROFILE

John Giang

COUNTRY: US

John is a film concept artist. He's currently at ILM, where he recently worked on Rango, Transformers and Iron Man. John also exhibits his personal artwork. **orbitalharvest.com**

DVD Assets

The files you need are on your DVD in the John Giang folder, in the Workshops section.

When I was asked to do a mech piece for this workshop, I was delighted to accept the task. When I was much younger, powerful images of four-legged walkers invading snow-covered rebel bases left a lasting impression on me. Though in the movies these machines were supposed to be lifeless, to me they exuded so much personality and charm, but most of all they struck fear. Now I'm older, I love the grit and realism of modern war films. The oppressive atmosphere of conflict and the human drama in these modern-day movies are vivid and palpable.

This workshop will demonstrate how to create an illustration that I hope will exude that coolness of the technological beasts I loved, mixed with the drama and devastation of a real urban war.

Instantly, I imagined a warehouse-sized mech lumbering through the wrecked city. Throughout the process of creating this workshop, I went back and forth between my illustration style, which provides greater creative and stylistic latitude, and a method using 3D tools for additional realism. Ultimately, I'll be using a technique that requires two primary tools: Adobe Photoshop and Luxology modo. I hope you enjoy the workshop and learn something useful, so let's get started!
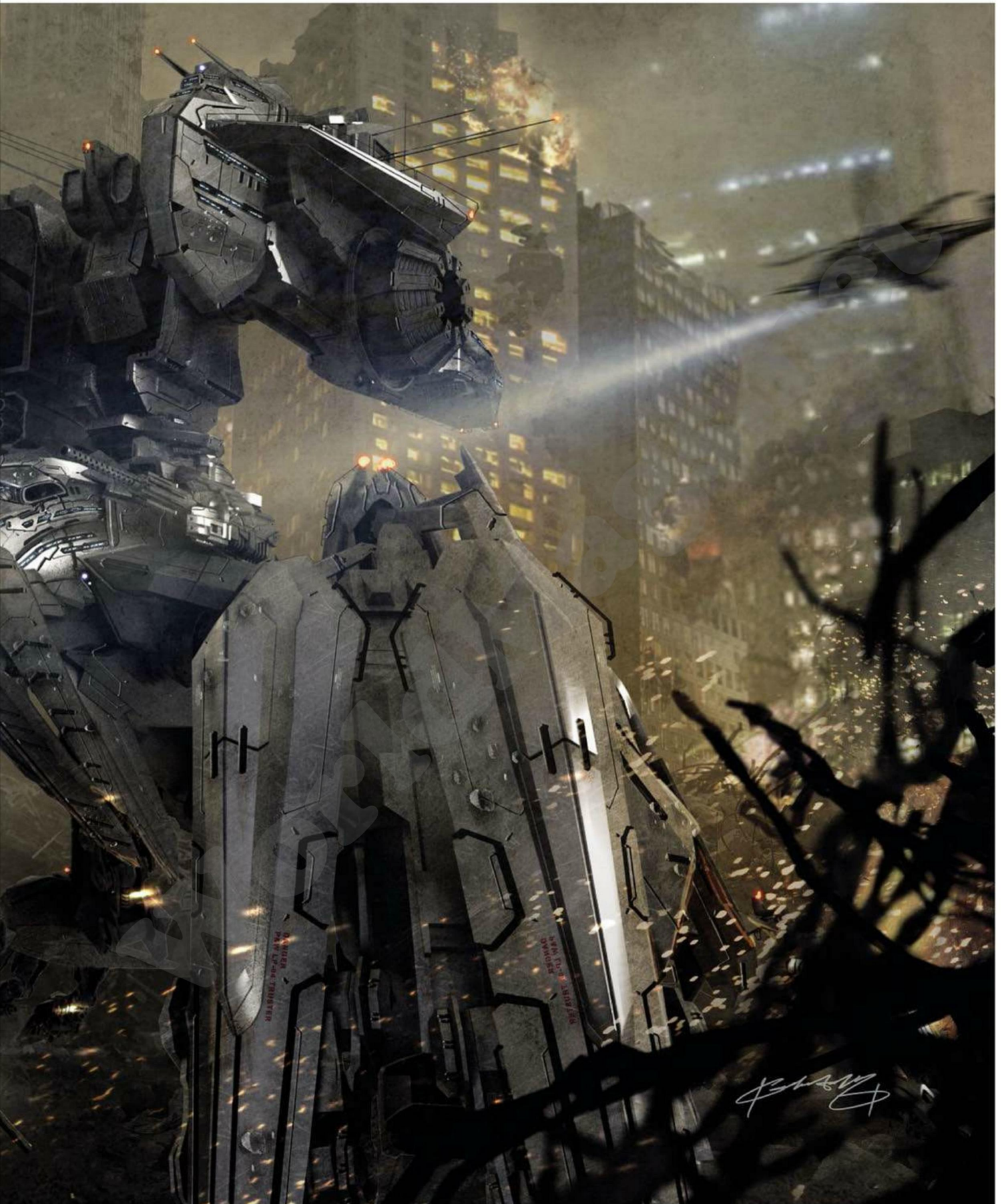
1 Gather reference

To start my process, I hit my library of books, magazines and, of course, the internet for good reference images. I'm amassing a large selection of images of oil rigs, refineries and earth-movers. Additionally, I gather a collection of tanks and military ground vehicles. Generally, the shots of the huge machinery provide many cropping and compositional ideas, as well as good scale cues. The tanks provide an overall vibe and posture for my mech design.

2 Create composition thumbnails

Next I move onto quickly producing thumbs, which will help to convey possible compositional flow, organisation, energy and even some story points. I like to keep these loose and full of open-ended ideas. These initial steps are always great to help get into the groove and mental space of the piece.

3 Rough out the design

Moving onto the roughing stage of the mech, I do a very quick and rough sketch using Photoshop. Because the thumbnails are pretty focused on composition, this next stage helps me flesh out the mech, especially since I don't have a solidified design to work from. Sometimes I do many of these before I reach a design that feels right. Other times, when I'm lucky, it only takes one. Even though the thumbnail is pretty nondescript, I like the insect and animal-like walker mech direction.

4 Block model with modo

A tool that I like to use when doing more photographic pieces is Luxology modo. This is a good 3D tool with an easy-to-use interface. Here I'm taking my rough and doing a block model. The rough model will enable me place to it into the composition with the simple building shapes. This provides an easy way for me to determine a closer-to-final composition, perspective and posing. At this stage, I assemble the model quickly, without worrying about the finer details.

PRO SECRETS

Variation is key

When creating a cinematic illustration, it's essential to vary the repetitious elements, such as fires and flames – they should have varying degrees of form, brightness and colour, depending on the viewer's point of view, haze, distance and so on.

5 Place your mech

Now I have my block model done, I place it into the environment of my illustration. I don't have the final model completed for the mech's massive cannon, but already I can see where I might run into unwanted tangents and odd angles with my simple forms. Even at this stage I'm keeping the process fluid, even though the end goal has stuck from the beginning of the creative process. So, I'm moving buildings around. I'm even changing the angle and camera views of the mech, to create a clearer and ultimately more powerful end result.
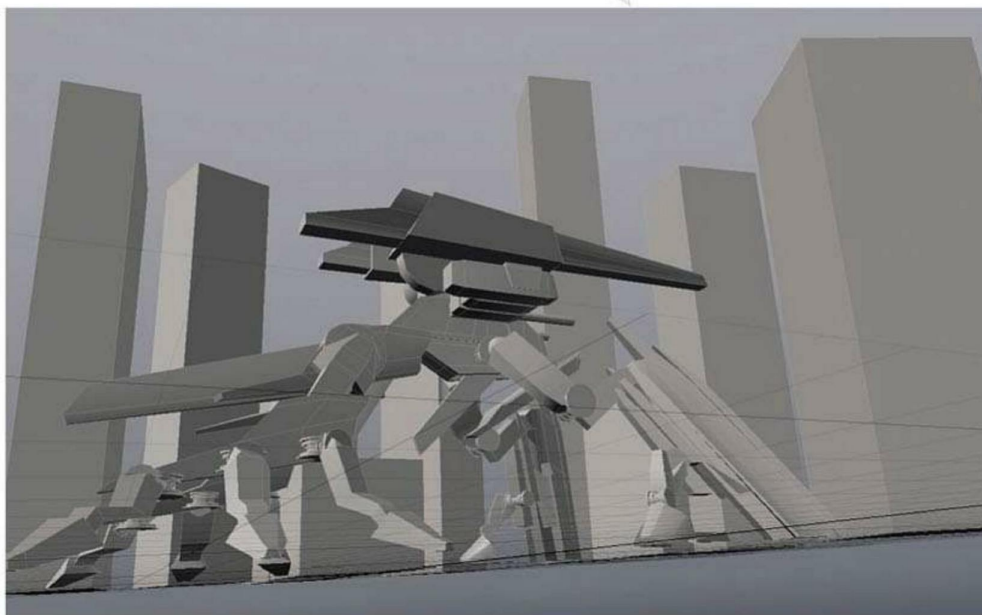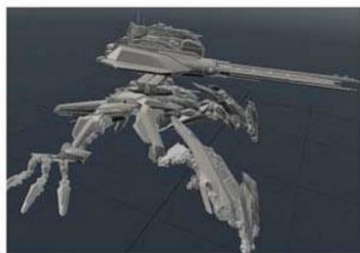
6 Refine your mech

At this point, I take the simple block model of the mech and I begin to define secondary forms from the major blocks, to the tertiary and smaller details. I'm keeping in mind that ultimately, this is not a modelling project. I'm not producing this with perfect construction for UV'ing and rigging for animation. My end goal is to have a bit of a shortcut to a photo-real asset that I can use to create a compelling illustration or concept piece. I'm only taking the refinement of the model to a certain point. I know I'll produce the rest of the design when I'm ready to paint it.

7 Render all those shiny parts

Taking the time to roughly detail the design now enables me to quickly apply metal materials, throw in some lights and add some fleshed-out building shapes in the background. My first thought is to go with a side and slightly rear view of the mech. On second look, I think I should go with a more front-on view, since many viewers might be seeing this design for the first time. This is another added benefit of doing a 3D model – I can now quickly change the entire composition if need be. For many complex mech pieces, being able to do this is a lifesaver.
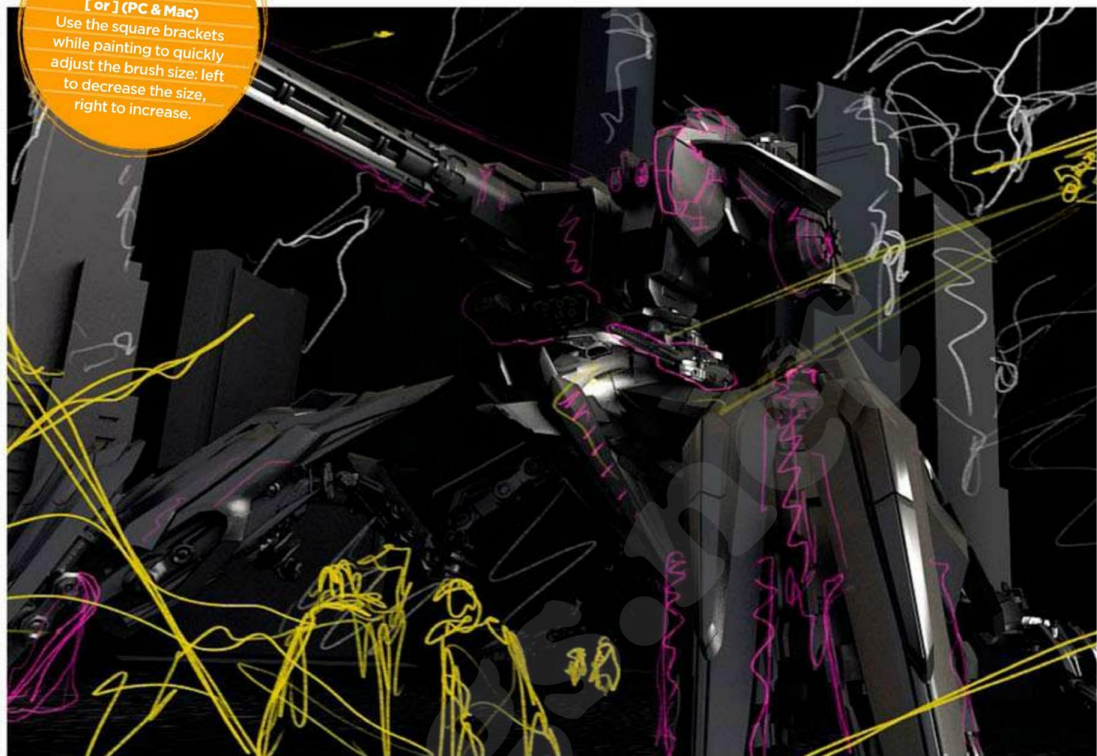
8 Paint it

Now the real fun begins! I take the renders I created in modo and produce layered Photoshop files. I quickly and roughly draw out what I plan on doing with the piece, noting any adjustments to the mech. I note the painting that it'll take to evoke the war-torn city look. I quickly sketch in additional composition and framing elements. I'm colour-coding these three categories for me to quickly see the distinction in the messy line work. I keep these in another layer or group so I can turn it off and on as a reminder.

PRO SECRETS

Keep it real
Use other examples of designs within a particular medium to inspire you. Also, always study real-world examples to ground your designs in reality. The challenge is to strike a balance of believability while being compelling.

9 Start to give your image some context

I place in some haze and an indication of some buildings further off in the distance. I like the warm colour here because I'm imagining the haze from the fires is being illuminated by the flames on the ground and in some of the buildings. At this point, I also add some coloured Overlay layers to adjust the colours and overall temperature of the mech's scheme. I bring more of the ambient haze colour into the mech, which ties it into the background. ➡
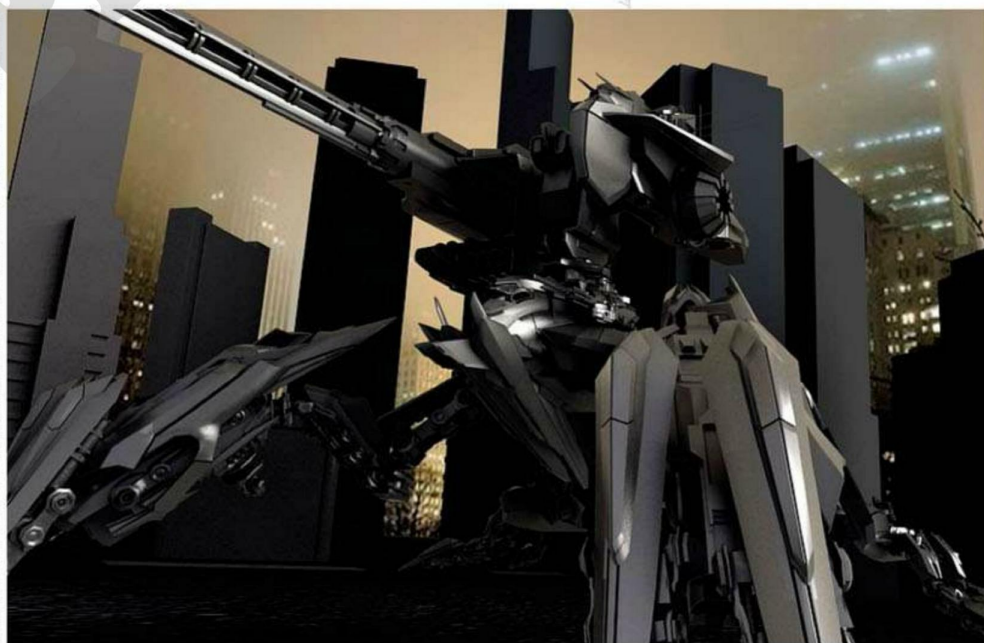
10 Add more focus on the centrepiece

Any hard surface nuts will love this part of the process. I'm adding the finer details. I'm keeping this pretty sharp because that's where the focus should be. They should be intriguing design elements to keep the viewer's attention. These are additional details that I didn't do in modo, and can now quickly apply in Photoshop. To keep on calling out our mech in the middle, I haze back the buildings right behind. This helps to create greater contrast with the mech.

11 Give the world life

Now I use the base geometry of the buildings to paint in overall shapes, add architectural textures and graft in lit windows. This instantly gives the piece a story and life. It also gives the sense that this war machine is lethal as a story point. Whether the machine is conquering or defending is up to the viewer.

12 Do some damage

I'm really reinforcing the story points now. It's about the details of the world. There's rubble strewn about. I cut into the silhouette of the buildings, using Layer Masks. I'm painting large, gaping holes in the buildings. I add more buildings behind the original set to show even more depth. I merge all the layers of the mech together and create a copy, which I squish into a thin strip. I darken this down and use it as a ground shadow for the mech. I then add even more haze to bring down buildings and give the mech more focus and separation.

ON THE DVD

WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PHOTOSHOP

CUSTOM BRUSH: 'FLAT DIGI PAINT'

This is a pretty versatile brush that enables pressure sensitivity, as well as full opacity for large, flat areas. The slanted shape enables you to get a traditional marker-like effect.

Shortcuts
Modo rendering performance
System>Preferences>
Rendering (PC & Mac)
Bring the render memory all the way up to its maximum.

13 Destroy more

Using Cloud brushes I create large smoke plumes and raging fires. Selecting local colours, I paint in some soldiers on the ground, further enforcing the story and giving the piece more life. I then paint in framing elements to drive the viewer's eyes back towards the centre of the piece. Finally, I add a Gaussian blur to continue to shift the focus to the centre.

14 Add finishing touches

I'm adding the last bits of haze to the background to give the most contrast at the centre of the piece. More haze behind the soldiers helps give them some separation as well. One quick way to create a realistic haze effect is to use a medium to slightly lighter colour as a Lighten layer.

I'm adding the last bits of detail to the mech too. I add seam dirt, rust, bullet holes, decals and smaller detail lights. I create further depth by adding flowing embers, which also helps to create a great left-to-right flow, which is stopped by the adjusted foreground debris.

A nice final touch is the helicopter that's shining a spotlight on the mech – again, this is another element to ensure focus toward the centre, while it also frames the overall piece.

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Yap Kun Rong uses repetition and form in his stylised environments.

New visions
Put a new spin on your old ideas! GP Zang reinvents the mythological centaur.

Monkey art magic
Jesper Ejsing's Monkey King workshop will show you how to become inspired by Chinese myths and legends.

ISSUE 77 ON SALE *14 November 2011*

Painter
CREATE AN EXOTIC LANDSCAPE

Simon Dominic combines Painter 12's Real Watercolor brushes with some old favourites to produce a whole new world of vibrant colour

I n the realms of digital painting, it's fair to say I'm a bit of a dinosaur. Despite the huge array of brush categories that Painter provides, I tend to stick with what I know, and in my day-to-day work I rarely stray from my trusty Artists' Oils and Basic Circular brushes. As Painter expands its tool set with every new release I must confess to feeling a bit guilty about my parochial workflow, so it was with a mixture of relief and trepidation that I agreed to do a workshop based around the new Real Watercolor category.

Artist PROFILE
Simon Dominic
COUNTRY: England

Simon's a freelance illustrator, specialising in fantasy, sci-fi and horror. He works mainly on games, books, private commissions and magazines and tries always to give a painterly feel to his creations.
painterly.co.uk

Painter's Real Watercolor emulation is certainly impressive, but it does come at the expense of a CPU-intensive experience. Partly for this reason, and partly because I'm such a dinosaur, I've structured this workshop in a two-way split between Real Watercolor and the no-frills Circular Grainy brush.

In the initial stages, when the canvas is relatively small, I work with Real Watercolors to define the base colour and to generally set the mood. During the later stages, when I resample the canvas to full working size, I swap to the Circular brush to enhance the image, boosting detail and deepening contrast. I say 'further enhance' because my primary aim in this workshop is to preserve the look and texture inherent in the Real Watercolor brush-strokes, while taking advantage of the simple precision of the Circular brush.

Real Watercolor has a host of attributes that can be tweaked to give different effects. To keep the workshop focused I only tweak a couple of these – Evaporation Rate and Pickup – and I'll explain their effects later.

1 Concept sketches
Before I begin I play with Real Watercolor to get in the mood. Claire, the ImagineFX editor, has decided that my theme is to revolve around an exotic alien landscape, so I make myself useful by sketching out some colour roughs, or concept thumbnails. I work fairly rapidly and spontaneously, taking no more than 10 minutes per sketch. My aim is to take inspiration from the elements in these sketches and incorporate one or more of them into my main image.

2 The emerging landscape
I begin by creating a blank canvas 900 pixels high and adding a layer. Onto this layer I dab a selection of dark blobs to represent the main elements of my landscape. I use the Circular brush in conjunction with a grainy paper defined in the Paper panel. Although this sketch might resemble a tonal or value study, it actually isn't one, because instead of representing lights and darks it's simply a guide for my next stage.
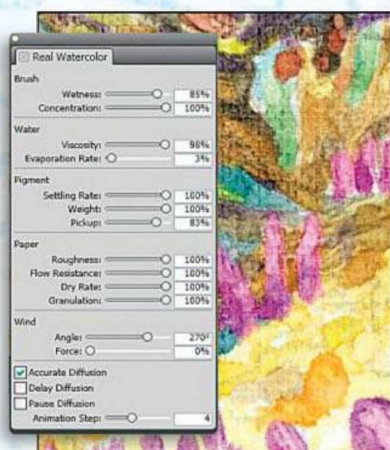

3 The outline sketch
I lower the opacity of the layer so it's barely visible and create another layer on top of it. Onto this new layer (Layer 2) I sketch the outlines of my scene using a smaller version of the same brush. For the planets I select the Oval Shape tool and constrain the output to a circle by holding down Shift before and during dragging. I Collapse them both into Layer 2. ➡
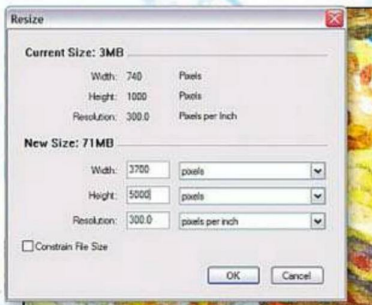
Resize

Current Size: 3MB

Width:	740	Pixels
Height:	1000	Pixels
Resolution:	300.0	Pixels per Inch

New Size: 71MB

Width:	3700	pixels
Height:	5000	pixels
Resolution:	300.0	pixels per inch

☐ Constrain File Size

[OK] [Cancel]

8 Adding rough detail

With my Circular brush sized between 10 and 40 pixels I work through the image, adding rough detail. It's crucial to respect the textures already laid down by the Real Watercolor brush. Painting over them would not only render the watercolour process moot, but would cause that authentic, painterly feel to be lost. As such, I'm careful to accentuate the texture rather than replace it.

6 Saving and resizing

To keep my watercolours 'wet' I've been saving in Painter's native RIF format. However, I prefer to work in PSD so, given that I've now completed the Watercolor stages, I drop both my layers to the canvas and save as PSD. Using Canvas>Resize… I resample my canvas to 3,700x5,000 pixels at 300PPI. This is larger than specified in the commission, but working big produces a better quality of detail when the final image is sized down.

4 Painting with Real Watercolors

I delete Layer 1 and reduce Layer 2's opacity. I select my Real Watercolor brush and begin the process of adding colour. My first stroke automatically creates a new layer called Watercolor Layer 1. I start with the sky and move from background to foreground. Objects far from the viewer are tinted blue – the colour of the sky – while those nearby are more vibrant and contrasty. I modify the Evaporation Rate and Pickup attributes as required.

7 Navigating the canvas

When working with a large canvas at high zoom settings, it can be a pain to move from one section to another. Space+drag works for short distances, but this isn't ideal because it can often take several drags to get where you want. This is where I find Painter 12's new Navigator invaluable. As well as enabling easy dragging, you can always see where you are in relation to the whole image. With this in mind I zoom to 33 per cent and start adding rough detail.
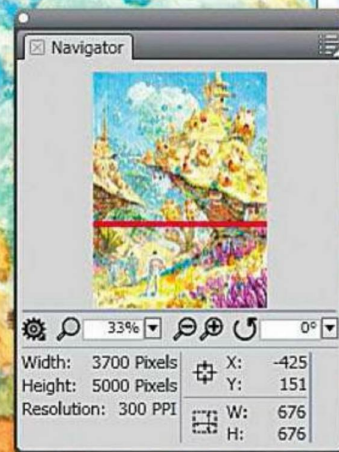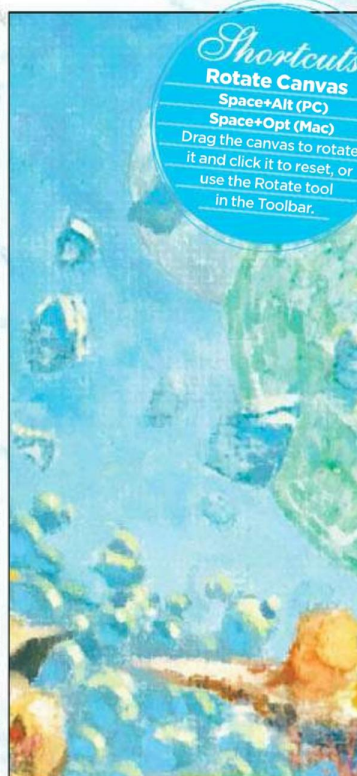
9 Exaggerate the image's lighting

In keeping with the overstated nature of the piece I emphasise the lighting, especially on the foreground elements. For example, on the purple cucumber-type plants I zoom to 100 per cent and boost the watercolour textures to reveal shadow, highlight and specular reflection top right. I dab saturated purple to the left of centre to suggest a slight transparency and to the left of that a smear of yellow to simulate light reflected from the ground. And right on the top, a little sky blue.

Real Watercolor

Brush
- Wetness: 85%
- Concentration: 100%

Water
- Viscosity: 90%
- Evaporation Rate: 3%

Pigment
- Settling Rate: 100%
- Weight: 100%
- Pickup: 83%

Paper
- Roughness: 100%
- Flow Resistance: 100%
- Dry Rate: 100%
- Granulation: 100%

Wind
- Angle: 270°
- Force: 0%

☑ Accurate Diffusion
☐ Delay Diffusion
☐ Pause Diffusion
- Animation Step: 4

5 Evaporation Rate and Pickup

Evaporation Rate is how fast water dries on the paper. I lower this setting for foreground elements because it results in a more fringed, textured effect. For the sky and distant elements I keep the setting high for a smoother result. Pickup deals with how fresh paint interacts with existing paint. A lower value produces a darker dab whereas a higher value is more forgiving when painting lights over darks.

ON THE DVD

WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PAINTER

CUSTOM BRUSHES: REAL WATERCOLOR

I use this brush to lay down the colour groundwork and create the authentic textures that carry through to the final image. As with my other brushes, I use it in conjunction with paper grain.

CUSTOM BRUSH: CIRCULAR GRAINY

This brush is great for everything from rough work, outline sketching, blending and colour detail. In this workshop I use it to sketch and to enhance the initial watercolour work.

Shortcuts

Rotate Canvas
Space+Alt (PC)
Space+Opt (Mac)
Drag the canvas to rotate it and click it to reset, or use the Rotate tool in the Toolbar.

Navigator

33%

Width: 3700 Pixels
Height: 5000 Pixels
Resolution: 300 PPI

X: -425
Y: 151
W: 676
H: 676

0°

10 Shadows within other shadows

It's important to remember that even objects shaded from direct light cast shadows. Generally, an outdoor object shaded from sunlight will be lit solely from reflected light, and this causes its shadow to be diffused. The bunch of alien cucumbers at the base of the foreground mushroom illustrates this effect. In addition, these cucumbers appear darker, less saturated and marginally more blue than their sunlit cousins. Our eyes interpret this as an effect of shadow rather than a variation in fundamental hue.

11 More reflected light

I work through the image at 100 per cent zoom using the Circular brush. At the top of the mushroom stalk I've added some uplighting to represent light reflected from the bright ground. Again, the effect is exaggerated but it suits the mood of the piece. I sometimes encounter a blotch of particularly garish watercolour texture, but in most cases I find they add to the alien ambience, so I leave them.

12 Alien plants

I create depth on the bulbous alien plants by emphasising the colours already there and intensifying the contrasts, in a similar way to the cucumbers. I make sure that the flowers are bright red where they catch the sun and a darker, less-saturated red where they're shaded. I also hint at reflections on the surface of the plant, blue for the sky and red for the flowers, to give the impression that their skins are a little bit shiny.

Shortcuts
Resize Brush
Alt+Ctrl (PC)
Opt+Cmd (Mac)
Either hold and drag, or assign keys to Increase and Decrease Brush Size.

13 Mountains made out of glass

To be true to the outlandish environment, the distant mountains are globules of a reflective, translucent substance – maybe glass. Still using the Circular brush, I strengthen the saturated blue at the opposite side from the incidence of sunlight, giving a feeling of semi-transparency. I paint the sunlit crescent with bright yellows to add warmth. As the blobby mountains become closer to the horizon I fade their colours into the blue haze, and this helps push them into the distance and give them size.

15 Detailing the explorers

I've left my explorers until last so now it's time to give them some attention. I've fitted them out in 50s pulp sci-fi white space-suits and because the environment is so bright, this means that even the deepest shadows won't be too dark. I paint the female at the point of entering the shadow cast by the giant mushroom, with only her right lower leg and left shoulder still in sunlight. This adds a little depth to the character and also gives more focus to the guy on the right.
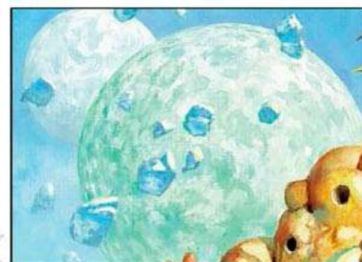
14 Sparkly heavens

The meteors floating high in the atmosphere are also made of glass, so I treat them in the same way as the mountains. Next, I use my Circular brush and my Blender brush to remove any artefacts from the sky and soften it in the process, while retaining that watercolour, painterly look. I flesh out the planet's textures by contouring my brush strokes to the planets' circular edges as we move away from their centres. This helps me convey a solid, 3D feel.
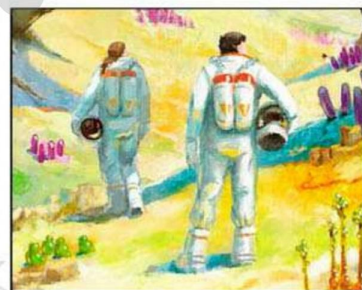
16 Finishing up

Last of all, I neaten up a few details and add some weird insects. I also realise something that's been bugging me for a while, which is that we don't need the third explorer. He doesn't add anything to the piece and three's a crowd, as they say, so I simply paint over him. I save a copy of the PSD resized to 2,622x3,544 pixels, and that pretty much wraps it up. I hope you've enjoyed it!

For Designers Every day not Everyday Designers

FANTASY & SCI-FI DIGITAL ART
ImagineFX
Reviews

The latest digital art resources are put to the test by the ImagineFX team…

11 PRODUCTS ON TEST
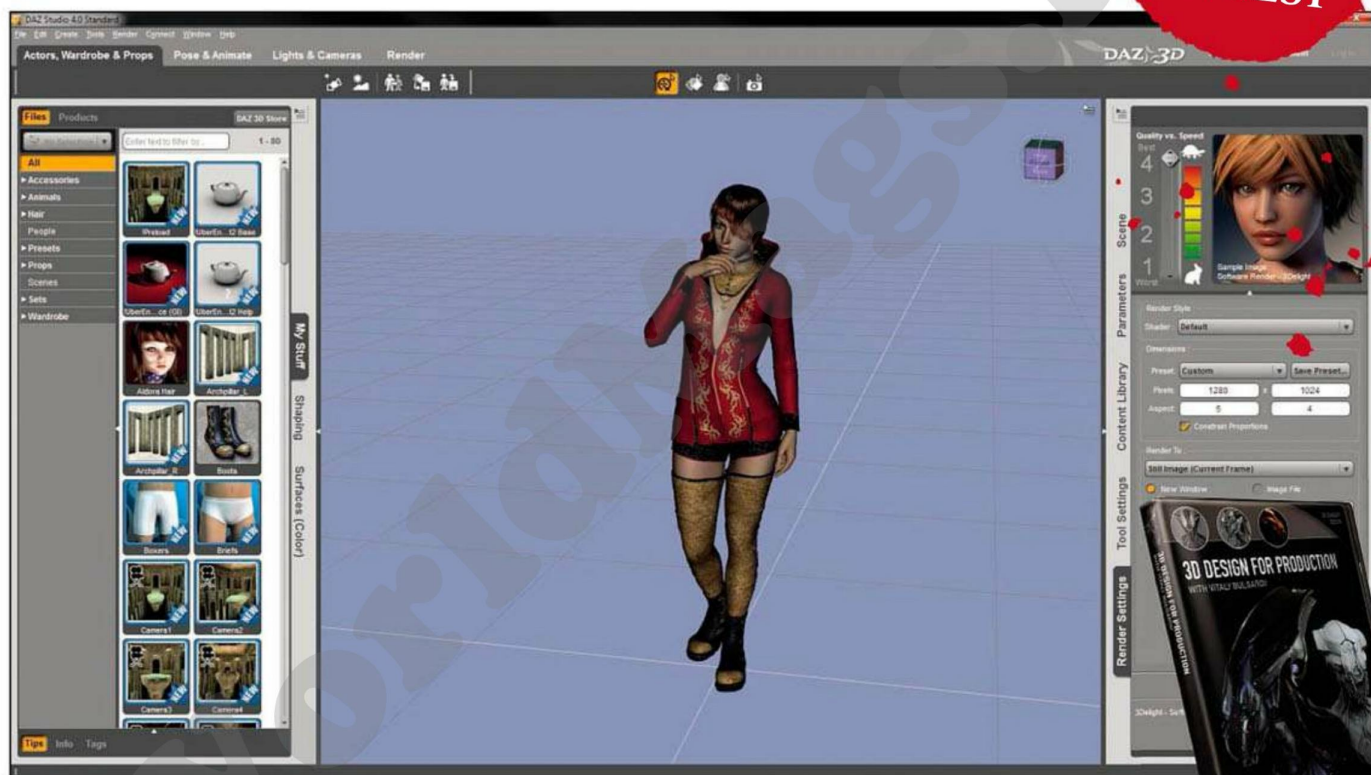
SOFTWARE
104 DAZ Studio 4 Advanced
A clever character creation system is just one of the new additions to the latest version of this 3D tool.

BOOKS
106 New reads
Halo: The Great Journey; Star Wars: The Clone Wars: Incredible Vehicles; Taxidermied – The Art of Roman Dirge.

TRAINING
107 3D Design for Production
Vitaly Bulgarov models a 3D helmet.

FILMS
108 New movies
Thor; Green Lantern; X-Men: First Class.

VIDEO GAMES
110 New games
Gears of War 3; Resistance 3; Rage.

RATINGS EXPLAINED ⬧⬧⬧⬧⬧ Magnificent   ⬧⬧⬧⬧ Good   ⬧⬧⬧ Ordinary   ⬧⬧ Poor   ⬧ Atrocious

Douglas Shuler uses DAZ Studio to create his figures and composition before enhancing the textures and finish the image using Photoshop.

DAZ Studio 4 sports a revamped user interface. Experienced users can customise it to suit their requirements, though.
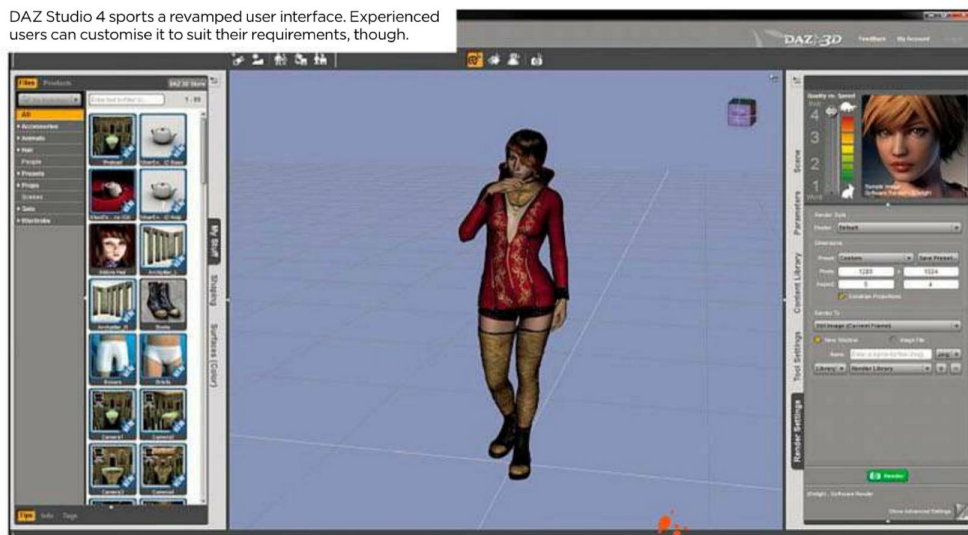
DAZ Studio 4 Advanced

MAC & PC

MIX 'N' MATCH A fresh look and an ingenious new character creation system add up to a virtually foolproof 3D art tool

Price $230 **Company** DAZ 3D **Web** daz3d.com **Contact** (00) 1 801 495 1777

Compared to the rigours of building your own 3D scenes or the craft of painting, DAZ Studio offers a more accessible route to creating fantasy artwork. You can assemble a scene from ready-made 3D figures and environments, customise it to taste and then start rendering. It's a great way to generate impressive artwork without much technical skill.

This latest version sees DAZ Studio split into four editions for progressive levels of competence and commitment. Advanced is tailored towards artists who want the best possible results, but aren't interested in the $430 Pro edition's tools for creating your own 3D props and figures. This edition is the one that's most focused on art.

Just one figure is provided: DAZ's new Genesis design, which enables you to morph the human figure in near-infinite variations: male or female, young or old, stocky or thin. Some basic variations and skin textures are provided, but you'll need to buy more to get the most from the concept.

Every Genesis-enabled accessory you buy can adapt to any customisation you apply. For example, you can apply a single fantasy warrior costume that'll fit any body shape you choose. One of the Advanced edition's key draws is the bundled Auto-Fit

> ❝ The Advanced edition of DAZ Studio is the one that's most focused on art ❞

plug-in ($100 to buy separately), which extends the same capability to any of the hundreds of Generation 4 costumes released prior to Genesis.

You adjust your figures via dials in an interface that's been revamped in DAZ Studio 4. It's geared towards beginners, who should find the program more accessible than before. The problem with the interface is that it's rather slow to respond when you click a different tab, although the opposite is true of the responsive viewport preview.

DAZ Studio continues to rely on the very capable 3Delight rendering engine for producing its finished images. It's faster than in previous releases, and its support for progressive rendering enables you to see a rough version of your render before wasting time on detailing.

There are some issues that need to be resolved – the interface in particular can frustrate as much as satisfy – but DAZ Studio 4 is a solid platform for your fantasy art projects, and the Advanced edition is an affordable way to access and customise the widest possible amount of 3D content.

DETAILS

Features
- 3D content library
- Genesis base figure
- Access to online content store
- Auto-Fit plug-in for older clothing
- Lighting with HDR support
- Progressive rendering engine
- Animation system
- Configurable interface

System Requirements
PC: Dual-core processor, Windows Vista/7, 2GB RAM, 128MB graphics card
Mac: Intel processor, Mac OS X 10.5 or later, 2GB RAM, 128MB graphics card

Rating

ARTIST INTERVIEW
DOUGLAS SHULER

This prolific freelance illustrator relies on DAZ Studio

How do you use DAZ Studio in creating your artwork?
After I've worked up a stack of concept sketches, I start building the characters in DAZ Studio. Sometimes the poses I envisioned don't work well, so I'll modify my composition. I'll add clothes, modify textures, move lights and adjust poses. It's almost like virtual clay, pushing and pulling the piece into a close approximation to my doodles. I'll then render it out as a PNG file to preserve transparency, then move to the next. I do my postwork in Photoshop.

What's the appeal of DAZ Studio?
DAZ Studio's intuitive interface and instant responses lead to a real fluidity of creation. I don't have to lock myself into a rigid workflow when I'm creating a character, because it's so simple to jump between processes.

Which tools in DAZ Studio do you appreciate the most?
I love the asset navigation tools. Items come up instantly with all their thumbnails easily visible, avoiding cumbersome 'back' buttons or 'up menu' navigation. Multiple Runtime folders become easy to manage, and searching for a particular item is straightforward.

What do you think of the latest version's new tools?
I love the Genesis figure! The ability to take a Generation 4 outfit and port it over to any other has been a real boon. I've been swapping pieces between figures and finding many new combinations.

What advice would you offer to newcomers to DAZ Studio?
A piece is never at its full potential just because you've hit Render: don't ever accept the computer's output as the final. The raw render is only a tool to get to a final piece of art. Solid postwork can make even an average render shine.

Although trained in pencil and oil techniques, Douglas discovered digital art a decade ago and has never looked back.

douglasshuler.deviantart.com
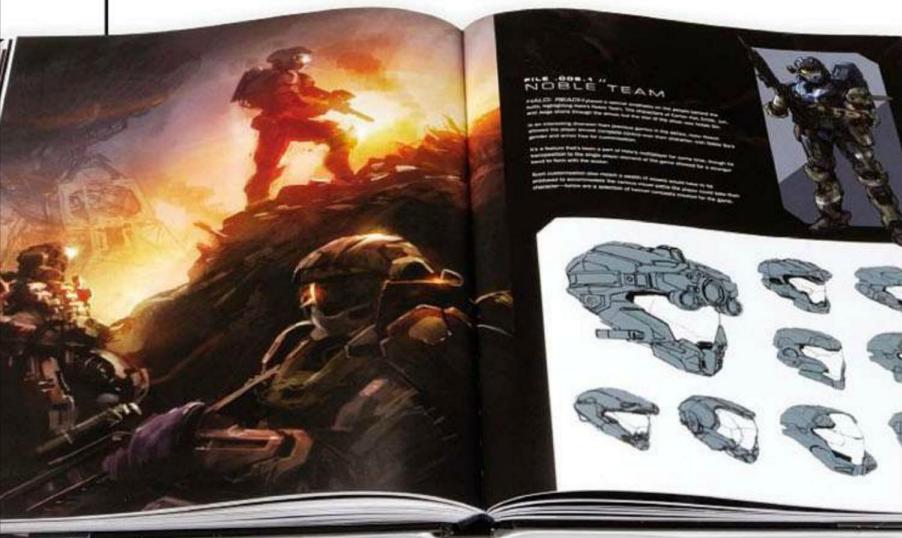
Halo: The Great Journey – The Art of Building Worlds

DESIGN DECADE Immerse yourself in this lavish art collection to celebrate 10 years of the Triple-A game

Author Martin Robinson **Publisher** Titan Books **Price** £25
Web titanbooks.com **Available** 21 October

The Halo franchise turns 10 this year. Hard to believe, so maybe time really does fly when you're having fun, or shooting stuff. In honour of its anniversary, fans of Halo and games illustration can get hold of this stunning hardback, which features over 400 pieces of concept art from the series.

The book includes work from Halo: Combat Evolved, Halo 2, Halo 3, Halo Wars, Halo 3: ODST, Halo: Legends and Halo: Reach – so no matter which is your favourite game, there's something here for you.

Written by award-winning games journalist Martin Robinson, Halo: The Great Journey is a fitting tribute to a title that not only helped change the face and fortunes of video games, but also continues to use some of the best artists in the world to deliver concept art at the top of its field.

As expected, the quality of the artwork is high and features a wealth of detail, from the designs of hatchways to smooth renderings of vehicles, to full-blown battle scenes. Indeed, there are so many intricate images that they leave you in awe of not only the talent behind them, but also a sense of just how much work went into perfecting every aspect of the game's creation. The book does a great job of showing off what an iterative process it is.

As we journey spread by spread through Halo's artistic evolution we're sometimes accompanied by the concept artists behind the illustrations, including Isaac Hannaford, Frank Capezzuto and Jaime Jones. Their recollections provide a good insight into their individual thought and production processes.

Another great touch is the picture index that credits the individual artists for their images, which is something that can be missing from art of books – presumably because games studios prefer to show a unified front rather than shine a light on specific artists.

Halo: The Great Journey will appeal to any artists wanting to dig a bit deeper into the evolution of the Halo universe and glean information from the creative teams that helped bring the game to life.

RATING
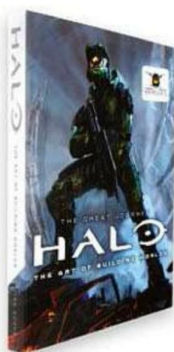
Further reading…

Star Wars spaceships and transports up close, and a glimpse at a macabre world

Star Wars The Clone Wars: Incredible Vehicles

Author Jason Fry
Publisher Dorling Kindersley **Price** £13
Available Now
RATING

The Star Wars universe is known for its rich assortment of spaceships and other odd modes of transport, and The Clone Wars carries on this grand tradition. Incredible Vehicles features just about every fighter, capital ship and speeder bike that's been created for the TV series, along with a smattering of droids.

The pages are full of colourful, high-quality renders, with plenty of back-story captions to engage younger fans of the TV series. Eight vehicles are seen in cross-section and annotated, which helps to offset the disappointing lack of artist insight and early concept art. DK's book proves that the constraints of an overfamiliar setting needn't hamper the artistic desire to design great-looking craft.

Taxidermied: The Art of Roman Dirge

Author Roman Dirge
Publisher Titan Books **Price** £25
**Available** Now
RATING

Taxidermied is a collection of disturbing yet beautiful illustrations from an artist who specialises in the weird but wonderful. The cover art immediately gives this hardback a distinctly dark and macabre feeling, but we know better than to judge a book by its cover.

Although the work inside follows the same theme, each piece has a certain cuteness and charm about it that leaves you smiling all the way through the book's 111 pages. An undoubted highlight is Dirge's self-deprecating commentary, which is almost as brilliant as the artwork itself. The artist is something of an enigma, and the short paragraphs provide a rare insight into the quirky personality behind these unique and beautiful illustrations.

Vitaly shows how to create a fully rendered 3D design. He starts by making a sketch of an alien bust in ZBrush.
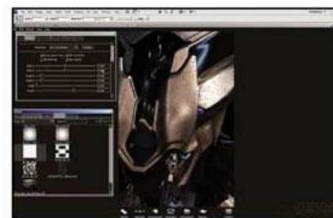
Vitaly generates a detailed headgear design in Softimage, demonstrating how to create multi-layered metal plates.
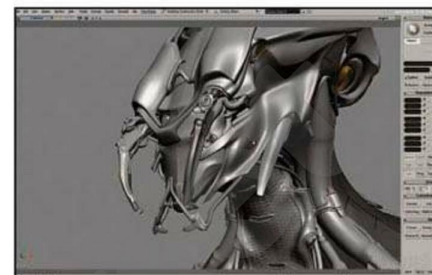
Once the headgear design is complete, Vitaly finalises it in Photoshop, adding textures and detail enhancements.

3D Design for Production

GET A HEAD Blizzard artist and designer Vitaly Bulgarov helps you take your 3D modelling skills beyond the basics – if you can keep up

Publisher The Gnomon Workshop **Price** $69 **Format** DVD-ROM/Download **Web** thegnomonworkshop.com

If you subscribe to the principle that it's the artist who matters, not their tools, then Vitaly Bulgarov's video on 3D modelling techniques may test the limits of that belief. The bulk of his video shows him using Softimage (referred to by Vitaly under its old name of XSI), which is not one of the most-used packages among 3D artists, excellent though it is. But don't let the idea of watching two hours' training for software you don't own put you off: most of Vitaly's techniques are easy to follow and readily reproducible in many 3D modelling tools.

That's not to say that 3D Design for Production is a beginner-friendly session. As you watch Vitaly start from scratch to construct and texture a stunning alien headgear design, you'll benefit most if you already have some familiarity with modelling in 3D. If you're new to the subject, your mind will soon be in a whirl as you strive to keep up with what's going on in the time-compressed footage.

But if you have enough experience to sit back and focus on Vitaly's thought process and choice of techniques then you'll find a treasure trove of insight into the modelling process. Vitaly will help you get to grips with techniques including the use of edge loops to control definition in your subdivided model and shrink-wrapping geometry to follow an existing form. The production design element of the video largely concerns itself with modifying the headgear to allow components to function as they might in reality: a broader discussion of the headgear design's development would have been welcome.

Subsequent brief sessions in the real-time rendering tool KeyShot and post-production staple Photoshop show how Vitaly polishes the look of his design for the final render, but it's the modelling masterclass that really makes this video worth your time.

DETAILS

Topics covered
- ZBrush Block Out
- XSI Intro
- XSI Block Out
- XSI Initial Detail
- Topology Clean Up
- Neck Refinement
- Refinement Part 1
- Refinement Part 2
- Refinement Part 3
- KeyShot
- Photoshop

Length
148 minutes

Rating

ARTIST PROFILE
VITALY BULGAROV

Vitaly is an award-winning 3D artist who's currently working as a cinematic artist at Blizzard Entertainment. He started his career in Moldova as a freelance artist. After moving to Moscow, he worked in major Russian game development studios as a full-time artist, at the same time continuing to freelance for American and European studios. Vitaly regularly contributes to online CG artist forums and has won many awards, including a CGChoice Award and a 3DTotal Excellence Award.

bulgarov.cghub.com

Living like a common person on a strange Earth took it out of Thor.

Thor

LIGHTNING STRIKES An army of skilled artists hammer out the kinks in Thor's slightly ludicrous armour

Distributor Paramount **Certificate** 12 **Price** £15 (£22 Blu-ray) **Available** Now

Thor was always going to be a tricky adaptation. Fortunately, super-thesp Kenneth Branagh, surprise choice to helm Thor, has wrestled the mighty legend into a thumping and fun addition to the Marvel movie collection by essentially making the Asgardians an alien race once mistaken for gods.

This deft move creates a storyline that can be easily grafted onto The Avengers in 2012 and an opportunity for adventure in another universe. The quasi-origin story sees a reckless Thor Odinson (Chris Hemsworth) wage unnecessary war with the Frost Giants on the frozen, brittle plains of Jotunheim, while his scheming brother Loki (Tom Hiddleston) looks to usurp his father's (Anthony Hopkins) power. Thor is banished to our realm for his actions, and must retrieve the sacred hammer Mjolnir and find a way home before Loki seizes the kingdom.

The action on Asgard is deliberately po-faced, in a beautiful, flawless world that meshes the aesthetic of an ancient race with a glossy sci-fi Thor who bumbles through Earth's customs. Concept artists include Craig Shoji, Charlie Wen and the great Michael Kutsche, so it's no wonder the world and its creatures jump from the screen in a blaze of colour and character.

Controlling this cauldron of different artistic influences – Thor is Tolkien piped through Jack Kirby's more eccentric galactic visions – requires a deft hand. Balancing the tone perfectly, Branagh cocks a playful snook and shares the same sense of fun as Iron Man, while making the dazzling off-world action compelling and unexpectedly convincing.

At times, Thor plays like a feature-length Avengers trailer, made more apparent on Blu-ray with extras such as Marvel One-Shot: The Consultant, which shows the mundane paperwork of a S.H.I.E.L.D. employee. Despite this, the blond brute can still put the hammer down when it comes to blockbuster thrills.

RATING 🔨🔨🔨🔨

Also look at…

A saggy take on a DC classic and the Marvel mutants get the retro treatment

Green Lantern

Distributor Warner Bros
Certificate 12
Price £12 (£15 Blu-ray)
Available Now
RATING 🔨🔨🔨

One of DC's oldest creations, Green Lantern is a costumed throwback with powers only limited by his imagination. It's a hard sell that Casino Royal director Martin Campbell achieves with mixed results.

Ryan Reynolds is Hal Jordan, a carefree man-child test pilot given a magic ring by a dying alien. He's propelled across the universe and ushered into an intergalactic police force, where he must learn some life lessons, get the girl and save the Earth. It's a visual feast that has more fun with its menagerie of alien Lanterns than it does with impressing Blake Lively's earnest heroine Carol Ferris.

An army of artists, including Fabian Lacey, Aaron Sims and Henrik Tamm, have created a unique and believable universe populated by colourful aliens and imaginative battles straight from the comic. A sharper script and more off-world adventure, and Green Lantern could have been a hit. As it is, the franchise already needs a recharge.

X-Men: First Class

Distributor 20th Century Fox
Certificate 12
Price £10 (£15 Blu-ray)
Available 31 October
RATING 🔨🔨🔨

X-Men: First Class may cover similar ground to Bryan Singer's first two films in the franchise, but with fresh eyes on the mutants' formative years, Kick-Ass director Matthew Vaughn's take is full of potential. At the heart of the film are the blindly inclusive professor X (James McAvoy) and the revenge-seeking holocaust survivor Magneto (Michael Fassbender), who rally young mutants to harness their powers against the nasty Nazi-colluding mutant Sebastian Shaw (Kevin Bacon).

The first thing that registers, other than Professor X's full head of hair, is the subtle tone of the early 60s setting. The film swaps the dumb bombast of The Last Stand with character development and detailed setting, albeit set to a familiar narrative. First Class may repeat story elements from the previous three films, but it also transcends them to create a lean, stylish action movie with heart. 🔴

3D
WORLD

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A rose between two oversized thorns – the female Gears give as good as they get.

Gears of War 3

LAST STAND The final instalment of the accomplished first-person shooter ends in rock, sand and fire

Format Xbox 360 **Publisher** Microsoft **Price** £50
Available Now **Web** gearsofwar.xbox.com

Epic Games' head honcho **Mike Capps has said that the hardest part about making Gears of War was competing with players' memories of the original game. He has a point, too: although Gears has never looked better than in its third instalment, it's never quite as striking as that first play on the first Gears. Then again, maybe Epic should stop setting its games in caves and ravines.**

The combat has never been better. Gears 3 throws more enemies at you than Gears 2 ever dared or even could without ever losing the close-quarter gladiatorial feel of the skirmishes. Unreal 3's upgrades enable four players to take on hordes of enemies in co-op on more expansive battlefields without a hiccup. It's an explosion of colour compared to the previous games – albeit in muted tones.

The new female Gears looks almost human standing beside Marcus Fenix and the rest of Gears original mottled meat men – who themselves are a conceptual collision between Danny Trejo and 21st century samurai. The new enemy designs, once again overseen by the series art director and

living embodiment of Gears' larger-than-life-style, Chris Perna, are the exact right flavour of grotesque.

To top it off, Epic does industrial structures better than anyone, but within a level or two Gears 3 returns to the second game's obsession with rocks. In deserts, on beaches and in craggy mountain strongholds you're cloaked in beige and brown as Gears 3 takes one last tour of its densely designed world, saving a knowingly colourful Art Deco island paradise setting for the series-ending finale.

The story has dictated the environments, and the environments have dictated a whole lot of brown, which is a shame when you glance at the concept art in the book that comes with the Epic edition of the game. Swathes of the mood pieces by the likes of James Hawkins and Shane Pierce are brilliantly lit and full of colour. Even those scenarios set below ground are imbued with evocative blue light.

However, online and offline, this is still the best of Gears of War game, and the best third-person shooter we've played on Xbox 360. Epic is ending its Xbox trilogy on a high.

RATING ✍✍✍✍✍

Fight for survival in 1950s America, and explore a post-apocalyptic wasteland

Resistance 3

Format PS3
Publisher Sony
Price £50
Available Now
RATING ✍✍✍✍

Set in an alternative post-WWII timeline, humanity is on the verge of extinction. A chance at one final strike back against the alien Chimera army makes Resistance 3 an all-action road movie, following the Chimeran trail of destruction from Oklahoma to New York City.

Resistance's story lets Insomniac run wild with locations and set-pieces along the way. Every space is rich and detailed, filled with tiny touches that remind you people were once here before everything collapsed. There's a sense of urgency about the level design, with stages set aboard boats and on trains, but with none of the preposterous bombast of the previous games. It's a smaller tale of one man against an unstoppable enemy.

This is the title everyone knew the Insomniac team had in them, and a game worth playing in spite of the games that came before it. Resistance 3 stands alone, and is better for it.

Rage

Format Mac, PC, PS3, Xbox 360
Publisher Bethesda
Price £50
Available Now
RATING ✍✍✍✍

Part racer, part shooter and part RPG, Rage is post-apocalyptic without the Mad Max bleakness or Terminator darkness. It's a sunny and richly textured world where a meteor strike 100 years earlier defied the sci-fi odds and somehow didn't drive humans into predictable and pitiable misery. Rage's world is uncivilised but there's hope in every one of art director Stephan Martiniére's playful designs – from the characters to the fabric of the towns and cities – and in every line of the game's engaging story.

It's a friendlier apocalypse, where Id's Tech 5 engine throws around the most vibrant, colourful and expansive open world imaginable at 60 frames per second, even on consoles. While the PS3 version looks a little rougher than PC and 360, and the 360 version ships on three discs (!), it's a magnificent place to spend a day or two wherever – and however – you play it. 🔴

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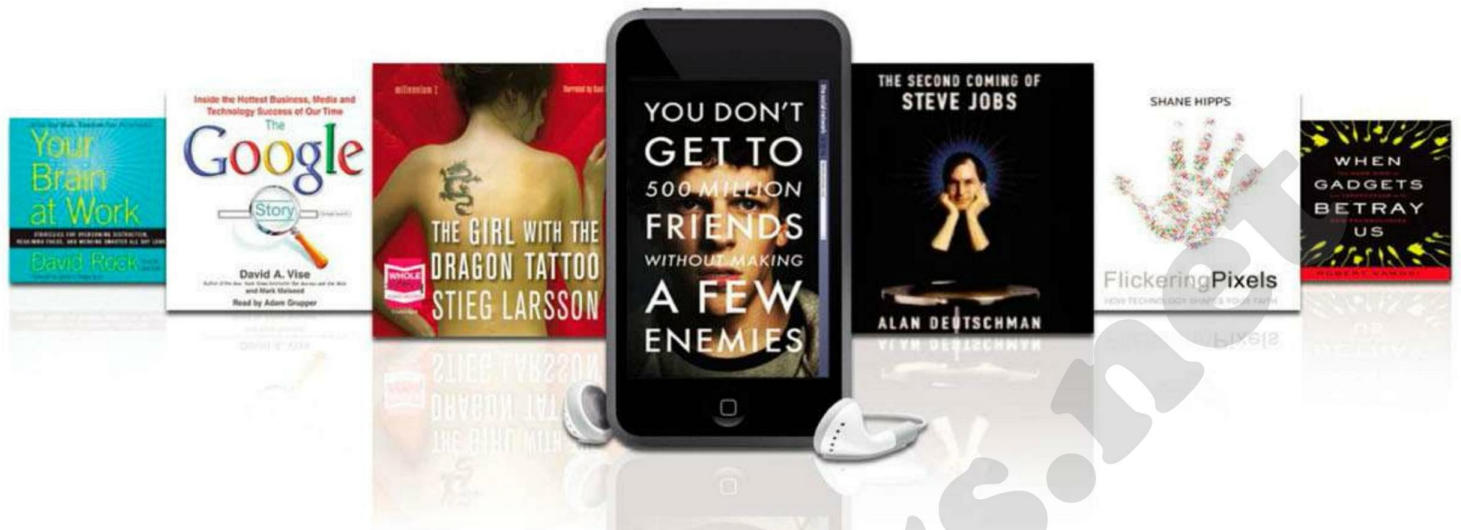
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One of Animal Logic's most ambitious projects, the animated feature film Legend of the Guardians, mixed photorealistic characters with fantasy worlds.

Animal Logic

ART SENSE Mixing cutting edge technology and old-fashioned artistic flair, Australia's Animal Logic team create visuals that fly off the screen

When the studio founders, Zareh Nalbandian and Chris Godfrey, first opened the doors of film effects studio Animal Logic in 1991, digital technology was in its infancy. "Expensive and out of reach for most people," interjects creative director Bruce Carter. However, the situation has shifted over time – technology is cheaper and the tools are available to everyone: "Which means we are now defined by our ability to think and create, and not by a roster of technology," says Bruce, adding with certainty: "As it should be."

Ideas and people lie at the heart of Animal Logic's success. The goal of the company has always been to nurture talent to create innovative character-based animation. After years of creating cutting-edge visuals for other people's movies, such as Baz Luhrmann's Australia – "I got to attend the shoot and was able to see the shots we produced come together from the raw concept stage, right through to final polish," reveals VFX supervisor Will Reichelt – Animal Logic went its own way and created the feature film about dancing penguins, Happy Feet.

"The ability to conceive and develop ideas, then execute them in ways that are appropriate, surprising and innovative, is an essential part of everything we do," confirms Bruce on the studio's growth.

Inevitably, creative people, whether they're visual artists or technologists, constantly seek to bend or break the rules and push techniques, resulting in Animal Logic creating its own software in the shape of the MayaMan series, designed to give non-technical artists access to high-end results. "Animal Logic has always had a team of talented code warriors able to build solutions to problems we didn't always know we had," says Bruce proudly.

The importance of teamwork between artists and programmers, offering creative support and driving one another on, can't be overstated at Animal Logic. "I believe that when people are challenged, they'll come up with better ideas than they would have if they were left to their own devices," says Will, before adding, "but it needs to be generated through positive stimulation, not friction."

With this attitude, Animal Logic has carved out a varied portfolio, creating VFX, concept art and animation for movies, TV and adverts. Its most recent project was the photorealistic Legend of the Guardians, directed by Zack Snyder, while the studio currently

The visual effects for Australia's most expensive movie, the aptly titled Australia, were created in-house at Animal Logic.

ARTIST INTERVIEW

VIVIENNE TO

Variety counts according to Animal Logic concept artist Vivienne

PROJECTS Australia, 28 Weeks Later, 300, Happy Feet, The Matrix

What skills do you need to work in this industry?

In terms of creative skills, drawing and painting are important, but what matters more is what you want to get across with an image, rather than how it's created. Every artist here works differently, but everyone needs an understanding of things such as lighting, composition and good design to create their work. It's a constant learning process and it's amazing how much you learn from other artists on a project.

How important is artistic creativity to Animal Logic?

Working in the design department here, I think it's crucial. The range of projects that comes in can be quite broad and styles change from job to job. It can be anything from the photorealistic characters of Legend of the Guardians to completely stylised artwork on commercials. It definitely keeps us on our toes creatively!

What software do you use, and why?

The majority of my work is created using Photoshop, plus I occasionally use Painter. I love the feel of the brushes in Painter, but Photoshop works really well for quick image manipulation and colour adjustments. Each artist has his or her own method of working though, so it really varies from person to person. We also occasionally need to load up 3D models in Maya and ZBrush to review, although I'm currently looking into developing my skills in this area.

Do you use traditional skills?

When it comes to sketching, I used to only sketch in pencil, but recently I've switched to sketching directly onto the computer using a Wacom Cintiq. I found drawing on a Cintiq was much more direct and it saved a lot of time that I lost when I used to scan my pencil drawings.

Vivienne has been a concept artist at Animal Logic for three years, working on films such as Legend of the Guardians.

vivienneto.com

has over 140 people committed to bringing the BBC's Walking with Dinosaurs to the big screen.

Every artist at Animal Logic has come to the studio in a different way. Some, like Will, fell in love with 3D animation, but he's keen to point out

a brief from another angle if the first attempt wasn't hitting the mark."

So why would anyone put themselves through this mill? "I've really enjoyed the range of projects I've been involved in," says Vivienne. In her three years at Animal Logic

"I have a background in photography so I'm fascinated by how lensing and lighting play a part in influencing our emotional response to a shot," says Will Reichelt.

❝ We've always had a team of talented code warriors able to build solutions to problems we didn't know we had ❞

that artistic sensibility and attention to detail are often more important than an expensive show reel. "Polished animation in a graphically simple-looking piece gives me more insight into [their] potential than if they show something more ambitious that tries to do too much and falls short across the board," says Will.

Concept artist Vivienne To agrees. She explains the importance of being able to communicate an idea visually, but that just as important as technical skill are imagination and clarity. "I remember how dejected I felt on one of my first projects when a concept I did was turned down," she says, explaining how it all comes down to how the work addresses the brief.

She adds: "It's more about having the stamina to go back and try something again and again, and tackle

she's worked across film, TV and commercials, meeting and working with many great artists. "Having the opportunity to work with such talented people has been very humbling and invaluable," confirms the artist. Maybe there's logic to the madness after all.

Working with director Zack Snyder once more, Animal Logic's team of artists worked on some of the effect shots and creature designs for the movie Sucker Punch.

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